

NECRONOMICON

No.2

£3.00



SPECIAL VAMPIRE ISSUE

RICHARD STANLEY

REDEMPTION VIDEO INTERVIEWS

CANNIBAL HOLOCAUST

BLOOD & BLACK LACE

SPAGHETTI WESTERNS

NAZI FILMS



Lust

FOR A

VAMPIRE

Welcome again as *Neconomicon* reaches its second issue. An awful lot seems to have happened since the publication of the first issue, and most of it has been good news I'm glad to say.

Almost all the feedback I've had about the mag has been complimentary, backed up by some pretty decent sales to boot and it's this combination which results in your holding this issue in your mits' now!

The only bad news on the horizon has been this issue's price increase - I know that 1/3 is a steep jump but I hope you'll agree that what with 4 pages of colour and nearly twice as many pages this time around, the mag still compares favourably with others that are currently available.

As far as the contents go, the main thrust (if you'll pardon the expression) is a special vampire feature - I couldn't let the current glut of "fang epics" pass by unnoticed, especially as most of the other vampire "specials" I've seen have either slavishly concentrated on Coppola's release or merely skimmed the surface in their coverage, often neglecting previous classics.

Hopefully, this issue will go some way to redressing the balance but if vampires aren't top of your favourites list there's still an eclectic gathering here, from the sad and sage bush spaghetti westerns, to the jackbooted march of the nazis, whilst there's a special feature on *Cannibal Holocaust* and Andrew Stroud's *Man Behind the San* article to keep the gorehounds at bay!

There's also an interview with *Dust* Devil supreme Richard Stanley - if you haven't seen the film yet it's a visual treat which more than compensates for a perfunctory plot, whilst the future plans of Nigel Wingrove's *Redemption* Video label brings me on to an even more optimistic note.

Is it me or are things gradually beginning to improve on the video front?

You'll glean from the *Redemption* piece that there are some exciting releases in store featuring the likes of Mano Bava, Argento, Franco and Rollin product. Besides this cheering news *Vipco* have some exceptional future releases planned from the likes of Fulci

and Warhol, whilst Fox have just released a widescreen edition of *Inferno*.

For years we have been bemoaning the lack of decent titles available but things seem to be changing for the better. Even in other genres, this improvement is being reflected in the likes of Akai who are releasing such classic spaghetti westerns as *A Bullet For the General*, and with an absolute "must see" scheduled for release in a few months time I'm told.

Hell - even the BBFC have got in on the act and have seen the sense in passing Peter Jackson's outrageous gorefest *Braveheart* uncut - definitely the most "serious" abuse of tomato sauce in one film I've ever seen!

I think it's important that now these kind of films are being released we actively support them and continue to press these companies to release other similarly neglected classics.

There seems to be a growing realisation among certain sections of the film industry that many film fans are tired of the jaded output which passes for "major" releases these days, and this is now being reflected in the "cult" product which is rapidly becoming available - long may it continue!

On the subject of cult films, a couple of months ago I attended the Film Extremes Festival at the Scala which was great fun, thanks mainly to the hard work put in behind the scenes by the organisers. I don't know how many saw "The Little Picture Show" TV feature on the event but I found the interview with *The Dark Side's* Allan Bryce rather misleading.

Although I do actually enjoy the magazine, I found his willingness to take sole credit for the emergence of horror zines rather brash - I prefer to look closer to home with the likes of *Samsen*, and to a lesser extent, *Abound* and *Shock Xpress* - more deserving of any kudos, having been around long before the birth of *The Dark Side*.

Anyway, that's enough of my rattling on for now so enjoy the mag and let me know what you think of what is, hopefully, a clearer layout and improved design. Until next time then.

Andy Black

Andy Black (June 93)

CONTENTS

- 4. Blood & Black Lace
- 7. Redemption Interview
- 10. Nazi Films
- 14. Cannibal Holocaust
- 18. Letters*
- 19. Vampire Special!
- 43. Richard Stanley Int.
- 45. Spaghetti Western
- 50. Nekromantik 2
- 53. Sherlock Holmes
- 55. Tracy Dick (over!)
- 57. Loud & Stroud

CONTRIBUTORS

Harvey Fenton, Pagan, Andrew Stroud and Andy Black - all appreciated features.

ARTWORK

All Jeff Lawrence except for the globe design courtesy of Ann Lyons.

COMPUTER GRAPHICS

Andrew Gilford

Thanks to:

Bobs'z, John Gullidge, Titus, Akai, Steve McIntire, Peter Blaumenbach, Columbia TriStar, Alison Hargreaves Associates, Nigel Wingrove, Vipco, Richard Contoley, Eurlan, See Cook, Harvey Fenton, Trevor Bailey, Patrick Redemption Video, Jorg Reitzgrub, Edmund Christodoulou, Productions George, De Reveregeed, Tap Film, Menarchia Films-FBI Christodoulou, Hammer Films, Polygram, AD, FBI, Hot Channel, Universal, Paramount Pictures, Warner Bros, Feels Films, Carota Filmproduktion, Boss Films, Filmair Compagnie, Totems of London Les Films AR, J-Les Modernes, Infra Film, Filmways, Shocking, Cinecine, Maya Films, Praga Film, Werner Herzog, Gamma and Richard Stanley.

Published by Andy Black from 15 Jubilee Road, Newton Abbot, Devon.

Printed by Printwest Ltd, Exeter.

All copyright reverts to individual contributors.



BLOOD AND BLACK LACE

Is it a crime to be beautiful? Well, yes, if you're a fashion model in a Krimis style thriller and there's a faceless killer on the loose. Rules are made to be broken and fashion isn't a statement but an invitation to death in the weird and wonderful world of the Giallo film. Appropriately enough, the granddaddy of them all kicks off the first in our regular series on that peculiarly Italian creation.

Inspector. Look at his face, he hates women. Taken in any context this is a disturbing, sweeping statement, but if anything, succinctly explains the prime motivation behind the vast majority of Italian giallo films. The word itself, is derived from the garish yellow colours adorning the covers of a particularly lurid series of paperback thrillers - a spaghetti version of if you will, of the old Edgar Wallace inspired thrillers which inform the German krimis films.

Basically, these films consist of almost entirely of masked/gloved maniacs slashing their way through an assortment of victims, male and female but often comprising of beautiful women among their victims.

To dismiss the series as stagnant "stalk and slash" mediocrity would be ill-judged however, as unlike their American counterparts, the best of the giallo films combine atmosphere, mystery, suspense and an outlandish sense of style, assimilating themselves into a unique sub-genre.

Where the sex "nut" will uniformly equate with death in the American model, it is the eroticism of beauty and its desires which provokes the murderous response in the giallo film. In the twisted mind of the killer if you can't have beauty yourself then the compulsion is to destroy it. It is a perverse generalisation on Peter Lorre's obsessive behaviour in *Mad Love* (1935), "you always hurt the one you love."

In giallo films love is no longer necessary, what is necessary is a pathological desire to covet something, or more importantly, *someone* and accelerate the "passion" until its momentum topples over into the most extreme act of "annihilation" to quote Argento's *Tenebrae*.

It is the eroticism of beauty and its desires which provoke the murderous response in the giallo film.

With these pre-requisites of the giallo film firmly in mind, it is clear to see that Mino Bava's *Blood and Black Lace* (1964) forms the seminal role model for this particular genre.

In Bava's film numerous killings are perpetrated but it is the motivation behind these murders that is more character-revealing than the violence itself.

The victims are guilty of only one salient crime - being voluptuous, attractive women and thereby providing the catalyst for the most hideous display of male paranoia and frustration encapsulated in the misogynist killer.

The Christian Fashion Salon in Rome is the setting for the murders with its haute couture models providing the victims. In a perverse irony, the *chic* models live for fashion but will ultimately die because of it.

Hell yes, the murders are hung around one of those convoluted, "petty-dreadful" type scenarios which so often haunted Bava throughout his career, but if anything, the illegal drug-taking and petty jealousies amongst the girls only serves to complicate the plot, interrupting Bava's lyrical *mise en scenes* with intrusive, police procedural sequences.

As the body count piles up and the complexities inherent in the film unfold, the killer is revealed to be Max (Cameron Mitchell) whose self-hatred at the desire provoked in him by the coles of exquisite girls who dominate his every day, and whose very presence compels him to kill, so eliminating his "weakness".

Upon this discovery, his lover, fashion house supreme Christiana (Eva Bartok), conspires to help him cover his



tracks only to find that the too is to be one of his unwilling victims. "You loved everything, everything but me." Although undoubtedly attracted by the idea of inheriting Christiana's fashion salon and its financial wealth, the killer's main impetus is remarked upon by another character, "Perhaps the sight of beauty makes him lose control of himself and kill."

Max and Christiana's joint deaths, entwined together proves fitting as murder has now turned full circle—the desire which fuels Max's homicidal rage conversely motivates Christiana, if she cannot have her own "love", Max, then he too will die.

"Perhaps the sight of beauty makes him lose control of himself and kill."

Max's refusal of style and beauty, along with his inability to control the emotions it arouses within him, is ultimately demonstrated in the white gauze mask which cloaks his face during the murders – he is quite literally a faceless (characterless?) individual, an interesting forerunner to the modern day, anonymous assassin – the serial killer.

This "nameless" aspect is particularly disturbing as it poses the the alarming theory that killer could be any one



of us as no real attempt is made to rationalise Max's actions or to diffuse his motives – he is simply left to represent the sharp end of male phobias and sexual frustration. He is, in effect, one step away from the Buffalo Bill serial killer from *Silence of the Lambs*, who craves not simply the destruction of female beauty, but to actively replace it by creating his "own" by immersing himself in their skin – the ultimate corruption of feminine radiance.

Just as the appearance of the faceless killer recalls the eerie, swathed lovers of Belgian surrealist Rene Magritte, so too does the presence of drugs and

fashion accoutrements draw attention to the fetishistic elements contained in the film.

There is the paradox of having characters with a craving for illicit drugs, whilst the killer exhibits a craving for the illicit pleasures or "fix" he gains from sexual arousal followed by killing – providing him with his own perverse orgasm/relief.

This is a fascinating parable for modern times where both sex and drugs are viewed as forbidden, and where sex can prove as addictive as a drug – and where, ironically, both can be viewed as the height of fashionable behaviour in the trendy, image-conscious 90's.

Bava's "ultimate fever dream" as Tim Lucas has dubbed the film, is at its most disturbing when detailing the killer's gruesome actions.

His orgy of violence displays a disquieting amount of sadistic zeal as one girl's face is pressed into a red hot stove, another has her head bashed repeatedly against a tree trunk, whilst a blade-tined mask is slammed onto the face of another victim (shades of the maestro's *Black Sunday* perhaps). In other moments of delirium one girl is strangled whilst another is found drowned in her bath.

Bava's restless camera also serves to highlight the visceral nature of the killer. Although very little actual blood is





glimpsed during the killings), instead the roving camera lens takes in an accumulation of strident red subjects ringing from the crimson drapes, telephones and chairs to the elegant dresses and the model's finely manicured fingernails. Urbaldo Tesauro's striking cinematography, advances rhythmically over omnipresent fashion mannequins, a creaking sign buffeted outside by the wind, and a fluorescent water fountain silhouetted against the night sky, while all around shafts of incandescent light reveal furtive figures as the strobe-lit, neon netherworld of violent criminals and decadent beauties informs us of the knotty influence at work here.

The intimate, ornate interiors and art-deco designs of the salon echo the sumptuous consumed beauties within, though the china-doll ornaments and ligatures also indicate the delicate, fragile artistic temperaments of the girls - all too apparent as they bitch about each other, caring not for those who have died and only concerned as to if they will be next. Like the mannequins which proliferate the house, they are almost statueque objects too easily pursued, too easily "broken" and condemned to perish at the crushing hands of the murderer.

Although almost universally acclaimed and acknowledged as the prime exponent of the giallo film, *Blood and Black Lace* has also ruffled the feathers of others - as Carlos Claret following

potemic will testify describing the film thus, "Has minimal plot and consists of a string of brutal murders, each staged with relish and in the most redolent hues, attesting to the fact that Bava is simply trying to titillate a very specialised segment of his audience that requires neither rhyme nor reason."

Whether you agree or not, Bava's work here has undoubtedly influenced a whole generation of film-makers, from the more obvious names such as Argento, to the more obscure such as Puccio Ruffanini's *Obsession - A Taste For Fear* (1988) and Carlo Varuzza's *Nothing Underneath* (1985) which both inhabit the fashion world milieu of Bava's picture, whilst Michele Soavi's

superlative *Stagefright* (1987) and Lamberio Bava's own above-average *Le Photo di Gioia* (1987) both feature scenes with grisly, still-life tableaux of dead bodies à la *Blood and Black Lace*.

If anything, this was the film to launch Bava's career, but despite its success, he remained "too much of a homebody" and spurned the lucrative advances of the US distributors who beat a hurried path to his door.

"It's ironic to think that 'Six women for an assassin' should have become one blueprint for a generation of future giallo films."

The longevity of the film's themes and stylistic devices have proved the most poignant comment on its undeniable quality, it's ironic to think that "six women for an assassin" should have become one blueprint for a generation of future giallo films.



REDEMPTION VIDEO - VISIONS OF ECSTASY ?

Nigel Wingrove, supremo of the emerging Redemption Video label has, in a varied career, published a punk fanzine, worked as a designer in Paris, seen his own film "Visions of Ecstasy" banned for blasphemy in the UK and has cracked the whip over such diverse magazines as "Skin Two" & "The Nursing Times" - (I think there is a tenuous link there somewhere!).

Now, like a breath of fetid air, his company are releasing a plethora of perverse titles including cult classics, "fetishistic vampires, gestapo sluts and killer nuns" - our kind of films, you bet!

Not content with presiding over this explosion of exploitation, our Nigel also designs the video sleeves and supervises the photography of the distinctive black & white covers which adorn the films as well as publishing his own magazine, the glossy gore and fashion hybrid, "Redeemer."

Intrigued? Then read on.....

You launching a double assault at the moment with Redeemer magazine and Redemption Video. What are your ambitions for both of these?

Quite a number of things but the main reason is that I'm thirty-five now and I grew up right through the 1950's and I've always been libertarian politically but quite right wing, so I grew up with the punk philosophy that if you don't like what somebody else is doing then you produce something better yourself. I love those sort of films myself anyway, they're a lot of the films I grew up with and like very much and you couldn't buy them. On the underground there's obviously a huge market for these films which is growing all the time.

I grew up with the punk philosophy that if you don't like what somebody else is doing then you produce something better yourself.

So I could go to potential video label financiers and say, look, these are the magazines like yours and The Dark Side right the way through. These are the magazines on the market. You can't have all these magazines, all this enthusiasm without some interest. I haven't encountered anything like this myself since the days of punk. I really surprised me how much was going on. So I go to the financiers and say look, these are the films

which people like, I can package them, you can buy the rights to these films for "x" amount and still make a profit, so that's how the label came about. When I saw the magazines which were out I got quite nostalgic and with my contacts in the film industry and fashion world, that's how Redeemer came about.

You seem to specialise in Gothic/Savoured and art house type films. What do you think is the appeal of these kind of films?

I'm quite closely involved now with some of the main magazines like Divinity and The Dark Side. There's a certain amount of hero worship of people like Dario Argento and Mario Bava and people ring up and say are you going to put out these sort of films - the answer is yes if they're going to sell. We're going to put out all the Jean Rollin films, I've got the rights to eight Mario Bava films and we've got the rights to Deep Red which we're putting out in September and I'm trying to get Tenebrae but can't get the rights to Intolerance yet from CBS Fox. The crux of it again is money - are the films going to sell sufficiently to put them out.

I think that these will be popular releases (considerable understatement!), but how do you think they'll fair at the hands of the owners?

They've actually never classified Deep Red before but the censors say it will get through with an "18" certificate but there might be the odd cut. It's one of those things where you can throw your arms up in horror but you can always discuss things with the board. For



instance, I've just put Daldemano's Venus In Furs through - most of the people I know who have got copies have got it from German TV which for some reason has got about forty minutes of this stupid dialogue going on, where's the version I've got is interlarded and is virtually sex all the way through. It's actually quite a good film! They wanted a try out where there is a rape sequence and the woman begins to look as if she's enjoying the rape, which only amounts to about forty-two seconds of cuts in Killer Nurse the cuts were thirteen seconds and haven't really altered



the film except for those with a kind of "train spotter" mentality. I'm not saying there won't be future cases though where we might encounter problems. Recently for instance, I was offered the rights to *Flavia - Rebel Nun* which I haven't seen yet.

Yes, I've seen it, only titled as *Flavia - Priestess of Violence*.

Most people seem to think I might have a lot of trouble with getting that one passed.

Yes - from what I remember!

I've got *Mark of the Devil* which is also coming out, in September - they said they would pass that with a few cuts. We've got the rights to *Caribid Man* which was on the "number" list but they'll pass that with virtually no cuts probably, and we've also got the rights to *Blood and Black Lace* and *Baron Blood* which will also be passed. We may have trouble with *The Story of O*. I don't know what the fun is about, I think it's just the s & m thing. If they want to cut that's not so bad, it's when they can't decide on a particular cut but rather that the tone of the whole film is

offensive and they want to ban it. I'm playing it by ear at the moment, but I want the label to work. By this time next year we'll have released thirty-to-forty films, all of this type which no one else is doing except for *Vipco* who are more gore-orientated.

You seem to be in the right market given the jaded state of mainstream cinema at the moment.

We've actually outbid a lot of cash acquiring the rights to quite a number of films, with over one hundred on our "hit list" already, but the fans sometimes forget that it costs a large amount of money to obtain the rights and submit the films to the censor.

I can't resist the question any longer - have you any Franco films lined up for release?

Succubus is out now - it's the only one we've actually signed for. I haven't seen it yet but I'm interested in *Sadist Erotica* just because it was made around the same time as *Succubus*. We've been offered the rights from Germany for things like *Sodomania* which

sounds a bit dodgy. One of the advantages of doing what we do is that we get to see loads of viewing tapes, often uncut and I've seen a lot of Franco stuff recently and I must admit that a lot of it I've been disappointed with. I saw *The Bare Breasted Countess* and I loved the title but often the titles are better than the film and I would more than happily have put that out but when I saw the film it was rubbish and didn't want to release it. I just want to introduce a lot of people who don't know these films to the genre and I think that if you spend £15 and take it home, put in the video and then say "Tuck it" - I'm not going to buy any more of their films again, then nothing's been gained.

I always think of Franco as being similar to Rollin in that some of their films are momentarily fascinating, but many are simply boring.

Yes, with Rollin some of his stuff I quite like. We're putting *Frisson, Requiem Pour un Vampire* and *Le Vampire Nue* out first, without subtitles as there's little or no dialogue. If they sell reasonably well then I'll use the money to pay for the subtitling of other films such as *Le Sexe De Sang*. These are the films people eulogise about in half the magazines and I'm sure that half the people have never seen them - they're really difficult to get hold of. My brother lives in Marseille and I used to live in Paris, but even then, living in France, their not that easy to track down.

Have you got plans to release Franco's *Vence in Furs* as well as *Dallamano's*?

It's on my original list. Basically, we've got a major list of films, not just horror but the continental type movie as well, like *Dallamano's Venice in Furs*, a lot of the late 1960's early 1970's erotic films as well, and Franco's films are definitely on that list. I don't want the label to be just horror, but a mixture of erotica, very much more the Gothic than the gore stuff, or "fusty" serial killer and of the market.

I don't want the label to be just horror, but a mixture of erotica, very much more the Gothic rather than the gore end of the market."

I imagine that this approach will give you an advantage with the censors because you're concentrating on Gothic, stylised features as opposed to realistic violence?

I don't know yet, I'm hoping that might be the case as I'd like to release other films like *Flavia* or even *Pasolini's Salo*, which I've

talked to the censors about already. One of them felt it was a masterpiece and the other one felt it was a flawed masterpiece, but they both agreed that to cut the end sequence would ruin the film. To be fair to them, they actually said have you seen today's Daily Mail which had an article saying that Dennis Potter's "Lipstick on my Collar" was a video nasty and the censor's attitude was "God save us from the Daily Mail", so basically they have to respond to public opinion and to the law.

Have you experienced similar moral panic in other countries?

Well, we are now exporting these titles to Germany, Holland, Sweden and America, so what we're probably going to do is set up a parent company in Holland and we'll also acquire the rights simultaneously for Europe - because I always thought that the label had potential worldwide and I know it has as we're exporting so much, but we'll just sell the same titles. For instance, with *Salo*, if that was refused a certificate over here, it's not just the BBFC's fault. It's never had much luck even in the cinema, but if I acquire the rights for that in say Holland, then I could package it in the same *Redemption* style and then export it from Holland to other countries and let people know in England that the film is available that way. We've also got some quite interesting, very old 1920's pictures *Haaxen* and *Seven Footprints to Satan* which we've tracked down, and they are being video processed, which is a new technique to take out all the surface scratches on the film and improve the sound when there is sound and also the blacks and whites.

The censor's attitude was God save us from the Daily Mail, so basically they have to respond to public opinion and the law.

So you're keen to release old films as well?

I'd love to try and build up the definitive collection of erotic horror from the beginning of cinema, right from *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* through to *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and beyond, right up to the present day.

It seems that things are turning almost full circle with films as people are looking back to these stylish films.

I don't know. I think the 1980's and 1990's were dreadful for film with titles like *Fatal Attraction* and *Basic Instinct*. I remember

I'd love to try and build up the definitive collection of erotic horror from the beginning of cinema, right from The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari through to The Texas Chainsaw Massacre and beyond

when I was fifteen or sixteen, the main films like *Soldier Blue*, *Straw Dogs* and *Last Tango in Paris*, whether they were violent or sexual, were actually powerful in their own right, they were good films. Then all the independent's were built in the 1960's and closed down and you had the major studios producing very superficial, very shallow product and a ven thing where they boast about an emotional aspect such as *Fatal Attraction* were rubbish as well. I think the newer stuff, which is being tagged with this "new violence" label - forget the "violence" bit, but I think *Bad Lieutenant*, *Reservoir Dogs* and even *Men With Dogs* which I did find quite disturbing, but nonetheless they were all powerful films.



There are some good signs now, with films such as *Boxing Helena* and *Falling Down*, and I'm hoping that there won't just be violence but also some good human relationship type films. It's looking interesting the way it's going.

(It certainly is, not least with the presence now of both *Redemption* and *Vipac* to hopefully ignite an increasingly stagnant film industry with some memorable raves from the critics - ed.).



DEDICATED FOLLOWERS OF FASCISM!

*The dreaded sight of the swastika and the ominous sound of the jackboot heralds the indelible rise and fall of the Third Reich as two recent releases, *The Damned* and *Salon Kitty* march forth onto unsuspecting video shelves*

It always strikes me as a most intriguing, not to mention ironic state of affairs when you consider the diverse, thematically stimulating array of films which seek to explain and/or portray the rise of Nazi Germany. The irony being of course that had the Führer succeeded in imposing his political dogma and social injustices upon us all, then these pictures would almost certainly never have been made.

In general, mainstream cinema has been unwilling to pursue any accurate investigation into the Nazi's meteoric rise to power, their political ideology and indoctrination, preferring instead to highlight the harrowing tortures and vicious pogroms inflicted upon millions, in a decidedly sensationalist approach.

To this end, *The Gestapo's Last Orgy* (1977), *SS Experiment Camp* (1976), *Beast In Heat* (1981) and the outrageously kitsch *Ita* series have plundered the exploitative aspects of the regime, leaving the likes of Fritz Lang's *Hangmen Also Die* (1943) to present the Nazi's as social and sexual pariahs, maddled with syphilis and "deviant"

sexual traits, and Pier Paolo Pasolini's val-e-dictory *Salo - 120 Days of Sodom* (1975) to link unfettered political megalomania (Fascism) with untheatrical sexual perversion, with Brecht's *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* providing an incisive satire of the swastika society.



The comparatively decadent bourgeois lifestyles and sexual freedom which propel both Luciano Visconti's *The Damned* (1969) and Tinto Brass's *Salon Kitty* (1976) especially, have their roots in the inhuman practices and Aryan master race doctrines espoused in *Hitler's Children* (1943) and *Women In Bondage* (1943) - both based on the infamous real-life "Lebensborn Experiment" requiring the siring of a German super race.

It's very much a case of "imitation being the sincerest form of flattery" as *Salon Kitty*, with its art-deco settings, political intrigue and camp performers, treads similar ground to Visconti's earlier film. Brass even recasts that film's star, Helmut Berger as well as including some of the theatrical song and dance routines which so characterised Bob Fosse's *Cabaret* (1972).

What both *The Damned* and *Salon Kitty* attempt to do, though with vastly differing approaches, is to explore the concerning themes of family disintegration, social class divisions and sexual obsessions - all set amidst the turbulent conditions prevailing and caused

by the growing influence of Nazi propaganda as it gradually begins to make inroads into "normal" society.

Their diverse approach to family life is one indication as to how both films converge on ideology but diverge on stylistic approach.

A powerful family of German industrialists, continually buckering and hampered by their own political in-fighting and back-stabbing ethos, pervade Visconti's picture, whilst a brief dinner-table gathering in Brass's film is the only indication of any family life - though here it is shown to be merely existing as opposed to thriving, with the remainder of his film played out in a brothel which is used to uncover potential traitors to the Third Reich. Here, the malcontents are not only stripped of their clothes, but also of their own political identities.

The self-destructive tensions of family life in Visconti's film echo the death-throes of the Italian aristocracy in the director's native country, although the Esenbach family here is more closely modelled on all the German industrialists whose financial backing fuelled the Nazi war machine and whose approval ensured the credibility of the Nazi manifestos. To use Hitler's own words, "we are an elite society where everything is permissible."

*"We are an elite society
where everything is
permissible."*
(Adolf Hitler)

This denial of personality and individual autonomy in favour of a slavish indulgence and belief in the dictator's rule is best encapsulated in one officer's poignant statement that "The collective thinking of our people is now complexity" as the immolation of mind and soul by Nazi propaganda is now complete, illustrating fascism's remorseless utilisation of people, who become mere objects.

In a similar vein, *Salon Kitty* clearly draws up the demarcation lines between



differing political beliefs as a young Hitler supporter castigates her more "conservative" elders over the dinner table; "Don't you realise you're a dead generation."

That the elders consider themselves to be socially and intellectually superior is ironic in itself with its echoes of fascist doctrine - especially as one dinner guest announces that "Today, German law is the most advanced socially, far more than the fascist code in Italy", whereupon this claim is rudely eroded by the ensuing debate over the "physical characteristics" of the Italians, coupled with bouts of belching as the whole issue becomes inviolated.

The fascist war upon that most basic of human rights - freedom of speech, is also shown as fast becoming a dangerous reality as one strong-willed soldier declares during his visit to the brothel, "Man belongs to humanity, not to a nation or a race or to a religion." Stirring words, but also words which will eventually lead to his own death on a charge of "treason". His equally eloquent outburst, "I thought I was born to build places to live and love in. Instead, I've become the architect of a horrible cemetery without graves, without

coffins", proving to be his (philosophical) epitaph.

The insidious influence of Nazism upon German society is a theme which informs both films, a spectre of ominous power gradually gaining a vice-like grip on the country.

In *The Damned*, the very opening scenes with their stent, turbulent music, inter-cut with calmer, pastoral motifs before circus style, almost theatrical melodies spring forth suggesting that "equilibrium" is about to be shattered, most glaringly apparent during the repeated cut-aways to the dominant steel factory as a new force in society is literally about to be forged.

Nazi regalia abounds in both films, from the regular intrusions of Hitler's rhetoric booming out over the radio to the assorted pictures of the Führer which adorn many walls and streets. Soldiers in swastika-clad uniforms pile onto boat trips, visit berkeley and gang rape one unfortunate girl in *The Damned* with Dirk Bogarde's ambitious industrialist leader even getting married against a backdrop of a giant Nazi swastika.

In the same film, a most frightening precursor to the later Jewish Holocaust occurs in the film's recreation of the

infamous "Night of the Long Knives" as Nazi stormtroopers massacre a group of soldiers indulging in transvestite orgies - the rivers of blood here illustrating any libertarian principles which are now swept away on a wave of fascist tyranny. The proclamation that "In Berlin the Reichstag is burning" is an all too obvious sign that democracy is about to vanish.

In *Salon Kitty* a professor lectures on "inferior" races and abhorrent scenes of pigs being gutted are closely followed by a whistle sounding to signal the "kick off" as a group of would-be Aryan-bearing women are given over to libidinous soldiers in order that they might sire future soldiers for the Nazi cause. "Your duty is to refuse nothing" they are told.

This cattle-market style breeding is symptomatic of the ordered, uniform sex which permeates both of these films. Unbridled passion is generally considered anathema, even in *Kitty's* bordello "regular" sex is submerged beneath a gamut of fetishistic pleasures as "slaves" are whipped in one bedroom, masked figures and chain abound in another, one General even projects film of the Fuhrer onto the bare flesh of one prostitute - the ultimate merging of fetishism with fascism.

Although both films detail Weimar-style cabarets, with transvestite impersonations of such revered German icons as Marlene Dietrich, and much decadent revelry, neither picture really seeks to investigate the relationship of power with that of sexuality and violence. In Charlie Chaplin's audacious *The Great Dictator* (1940), the comic genius himself plays the Fuhrer whose hot-blooded rhetoric causes him to splash water onto his trousers - at once implying the intrinsic link between fascism, fetishism and sexuality as "his genitals are as overheated as his torments."

"One General projects film of the Fuhrer onto the bare flesh of a prostitute - the ultimate merging of fetishism with fascism."



Neither *Salon Kitty* or *The Damned* address this issue head on, though Bogarde's promise in the latter that "I will be an command" certainly endears him to Baroness Sophie (Ingrid Thulin) who from the evidence of their ensuing "love" session discovers that power acts as a potent aphrodisiac.

This connection is also alluded to by *Madame Kitty* as against a garish background of deviant red lights she purrs, "Haven't you learnt anything from the Roman Empire. You must love and sing if you want to conquer the world."

Global domination is left as the next "logical" step in each case here as Visconti's film ends with Martin (Helmut Berger) safely exorcised in power - his unformed image ghosting over the steelworks to indicate the ultimate collaboration between industrial muscle and militant might, whilst the exploding windows in *Kitty's* brothel are a violent sign that war is fastly enveloping us all.

Inevitably, it is Visconti's film which carries the greater impact - its stylised settings and colourful frames creating a real visual flair, together with the salutary ending as Martin - who during the course of the film rapes his mother, injects drugs and shows paedophilic tendencies, is left triumphantly in charge

- a massive indictment of those industrialists and politicians who spinelessly backed the fascist indoctrination of Germany.

To quote the Freud model, Martin is very much a Thanatos figure of "perverse fascination" - a powerful leader and yet an utterly repellant specimen of humanity - the ultimate denouncement of the Nazi cause.

Bogarde's film, though certainly more focused than his yawn-inducing, over-blown "epic" *Caligula*, remains a partially interesting feature, too superficial in its equation of sex with jackboots imagery, whilst the director's fatuous claims of "inspiration" from the likes of Marcuse, Reich and Fromm, also allegedly portraying "provocative eroticism" which in reality amounts to Berger ordering his victims to "Take off your panties" - hardly cause for claiming a "real understanding of fascism" and its inherent eroticism?

"Haven't you learnt anything from the fall of the Roman Empire. You must love and sing if you want to conquer the world." (*Madame Kitty*)

Given the abhorrence of fascism, it's probably quite appropriate that both films (to an extent), alienate their audience due to the dearth of sympathetic, and therefore "likeable" characters on show here.

The relentless march of fascism concludes each film so it's not exactly "happy ending" time on either occasion, though trivia buffs will be keen to note the appearances in *Kitty* of Teresa Ann Savoy who dolls her kit here in preparation for the same director's aforementioned *Caligula*, in which she also stars, whilst Italian cinema regular John Steiner is quite literally given the "axe" in Dario Argento's *Tenebrae* (1982).

The particularly feared Nazi film genre however, rolled onwards - (if not

necessarily upwards with future releases such as Lina Wertmüller's *Seven Beauties* (1976) and Liliana Cavanis's *The Night Porter* (1973) which again reunites Visconti's stars Dirk Bogarde and Charlotte Rampling.

If anything, the appeal of this genre is one of filmdom's great paradox's - the copious couplings and risqué stage shows that propel the films were just the kind of unstructured, wanton displays of emotion which the real-life nazi counterparts completely shunned to the point of banishing them from the social agenda.

In addition, the starched uniforms of the jackbooted nazi's were equalled by their strict organisational minds - their regimented regime had no place for wild orgies, free-thinking and other frivolities.

The overt slave/master relationship cultivated by the nazi propaganda if anything, appears to have conversely rendered it almost the exclusive domain of free-spirited, & in fetishists who have immersed themselves in the aesthetic elements of the nazi regalia and improvised their own theatricality around the nazi image - incorporating other equally "deviant" role models such as the punk and biker fashions.

Whatever your view, no one can accuse this genre of becoming too embroiled in political and social concerns at the expense of more hedonistic pleasures, with these films very much like their jackbooted stars - namely, leaving a firm impression behind on the feral soul of movie history.

You will enjoy these films - or else!



FREE!

Since its first issue back in 1986, *Samhain* (the title refers to the Celtic Festival of the Dead/Halloween) has established itself as Britain's Longest Running Horror Film Magazine. Other publications have appeared and quickly folded but *Samhain* has gone from strength to strength and now you can see what you've been missing...for free! Each bi-monthly issue features news, reviews, interviews and features from the world of horror films and past issues have included interviews with the likes of Dario Argento, Sergio Stivaletti, Clive Barker, Sam Raimi, Peter Atkins, Robert England, Wes Craven, Frank Henenlotter, Tom Savini, Ray Harryhausen, Sharon Hutton, James Herbert, Donald Pleasence, Alejandro Jodorowsky, Paul Naschy, Abel Ferrara, Richard Stanley, Brian Yuma, Isabelle Adjani, Roger Corman, Quentin Tarantino, etc etc. In addition each issue includes a FREE classified ads section, a roundup of horror titles currently on the market, numerous competitions, reviews of current film, video and book releases, a piece of readers' fiction and much more.

Necromicon readers can receive a FREE sample issue of *Samhain* by simply sending a 34p stamp (to cover postage) together with your name and address to: **SAMHAIN (NO), 77 EXETER ROAD, TOPSHAM, EXETER, DEVON EX3 0LX, UK** (offer limited to one per household)

■ What they've said about Samhain...

"Tremendous...Literate..." *Clive Barker*

"Its articles and production are excellent." *Sharon Hutton*

"One of the best...the inspiration for many others..." *NMS*

"Our favorite...a four star RED recommendation." *Clive Barker - Deep Red*

"Samhain is consistently worth strengthening your Grandmother for!" *Melody Maker*

CANNIBAL HOLOCAUST

Love it or loathe it, whatever your opinion, the importance of *Cannibal Holocaust* is that everyone does have an opinion on the film, so strong are the reactions that it elicits from the viewer. Although it is a film you *must* see, it very nearly fell into the category of you won't see when it was banned in Italy for three years upon its initial release until its director, Ruggero Deodato won the subsequent court case, thereby refuting the charge brought against the film - namely that it was "guilty" of showing "cruelty to animals".

Animals, or precisely who are the animals and who are the civilised humans, figures prominently in this ferocious assault upon the senses as a TV documentary crew journey deep into the Amazonian jungle in search of "real-life" cannibals, only to then vanish, whereupon an explorer, Professor Monroe (open film regular Robert Kerman aka Robert Bolln) discovers the crew's film-spoils and with it, the horrific truth behind their disappearance.

"For the sake of authenticity, some scenes have been retained in their entirety."

A darkened projection room provides a suitably nebulous backdrop for the grim reality to unfold as we learn, by way of the crew's grainy film footage,

**The vilest abomination ever committed to film?
The most controversial feature ever to be made?
An audacious triumph or a sickening failure?
Whatever your view you'll need a strong stomach as we journey into the Green Inferno and question just who are the civilised race and who are the savages.
Read on....**

how they themselves suffered the vagaries of the hostile jungle environment, perpetrated their own acts of barbarism against the native "savages", culminating with the frenzied evisceration of the entire film crew by the vengeful cannibal tribe - all captured with gritty realism by the ever-spoiling film camera.

Whilst it is left to Monroe to chastise the crew for the cruelty they have shown, and by inference, invited their own grisly demise, the exploitative actions of the television moguls, who value sensationalist footage and high viewing figures over the inhumanity and sadism inflicted upon fellow human beings, acts as a salutary indictment of the

(im)morality of a supposedly "civilised" human race.

Deodato, formerly an assistant to Roberto Rossellini, uses a *cinéma-vérité* approach, utilising the scratchy film footage to suggest a veneer of verisimilitude to the drama unfolding before us, whilst spurious warnings flash across the screen thus, "for the sake of authenticity, some sequences have been retained in their entirety."

His quest for realism, ushering in a documentary-style approach is coupled with the central conflict of "civilised" western man entering hitherto uncharted and hospitable regions in order to "educate" the barbaric inhabitants into recognising the "superior, enlightened" culture of "civilised" man.

To this end, Deodato's film seeks inspiration from a vast cycle of earlier Hollywood epics, from the colonialist expansionism of *Tarzan - The Ape Man* (1932), to the tension-filled *Five Came Back* (1939), the big-budgeted *Suddenly Last Summer* (1959) and *The Naked Prey* (1966).





Deodato's learning curve culminated with the release of his own trial run for *Cannibal Holocaust*, *Ultimo Mondo Cannibale* (1976), which featured real-life cannibals in Malaysia and the Philippines.

None of which can prepare us however, for the atrocities and sheer visceral impact of *Cannibal Holocaust* which combines Hollywood genre conventions with the documentary mondo films of Gualtiero's *The Sky Above, The Mud Below* (1961) and Jacopetti and Prosperi's intense *Africa Blood and Guts* (1966).

Whilst the graphic scenes of violence within the film are undoubtedly harrowing, it is the film crew's gradual descent into savagery which is the most horrifying aspect here as Deodato's unflinchingly misanthropic picture unfolds. The young crew, Alan Yates, Mark Tommaso, Faye Daniels and Jack Anders are shown beginning their expedition in high spirits and "gang-bro" mood.

Such feelings soon evaporate as the tropical "Green Inferno" begins to live up to its name. Faye is rendered hysterical while a deadly spider is removed from her and a guide is bitten by a snake and his leg cut off in a vain attempt to save him.

Elsewhere, the basic need for food betrays a baser instinct as a live turtle is sickeningly cleaved open to provide food - even Faye's toiletry functions are filmed for all to see by the leering crew.

When the "savages" appear it is they who are frightened as their fleeing numbers are fired at by the crew - a calculated shot to the leg allowing them to follow one wounded native back to his tribal dwelling. Once there, a tethered bear is shot dead from point-blank range by the crew before they then proceed to torch the huts, raising the entire village to the ground - Alan quipping that they will call it a film of inter-tribal war, "In the jungle the daily violence of the strong overcoming the weak," he announces despondently.

This same, seeming callousness is later evidenced as the crew remorselessly film the forlorn figure of an old woman left to die in the jungle, her emaciated form coldly captured by the

camera. Alan's glib remark that "what you are about to see may simply be described as a social surgery" cannot disguise the fact that his trendy, liberalist commentary is far removed from the barbaric punishment on show as a diseased girl is hung up and burned to death by baying natives.

This merciless display of human impropriety culminates with two of the crew raping a native girl and feigning "horrified" expressions as they drool over the macabre sight of a girl impaled via the mouth on a long stake, each atrocity "lovingly" captured by the ever-present camera.



The crew's gruesome demise - each systematically cornered and ritually dismembered by the now enraged natives, is very much a case of their violent cruelty being meted back out to them, "an eye for an eye" as it were, very much the law of the jungle.

Deodato vehemently denies any accusations that his film is purely exploitative rather than addressing any of the greater thematic and emotional issues which the film so controversially raises.

His main problem is that, well made though the film is, and as convincing as its performances are, his own pursuit of authenticity carries him perilously close to the thin dividing line between artistically acceptable and socially

unacceptable.

Monroe's initial expedition into the jungle, in advance of the picture's central film-within-a-film structure when the documentary footage is found, still seeks sensationalism as the professor and his guides experience a disorienting scene of social "justice" as they witness a young native's "ritualistic punishment for adultery".

This involves a helpless native girl being rummaged with a giant rock dildo by her captor, before being pushed out to sea on a row boat and presumably, to a watery grave. The mud which the characters have been wallowing in also

threatens to engulf the viewer here, although Rox Ortolano's evocative synth score, with ominous chords and plaintive strings, has never been more effective.

Elsewhere, our faces are literally "rubbed in it" during Monroe's journey as a guide falls onto a decaying skeleton - its maggot-infested features caught in full squinting gloom by the camera, likewise, the still warm, human remains which Monroe is forced to eat when a "guest" of the Tree People tribe.

Monroe's discovery of the "lost" film however, strung around the skeletal remains of one of the crew and now painted ochre to ward off evil spirits, is one of the film's most startling

moments.

Whilst his practice of killing animals on screen in order to add authenticity to the assorted human atrocities in the film is thoroughly contemptible, the real question the film raises is of man's own inhumanity to man. The obvious comparisons between "civilised man" and "uncivilised savages" aside, Deodato's film does make us examine our own approach to life and those around us.

The colonialist boast by one crew member that "Difficulty doesn't exist and the impossible just takes a little more time" is indicative of the underlying macho attitude which prevails here

We are guilty of playing with natural minerals and resources as if they were mere commodities on the stock exchange, ours to control via the ebb and flow of market forces.

This continual display of greed and avarice, coupled with our demands for more extreme forms of entertainment, is neatly encapsulated by one hard-nosed tv executive who explains; "Today, people want sensationalism. The more you rape their senses the happier they are."

One only has to look at the effects of the recent Gulf War to glean the resonance behind these remarks as a



- that the strong will survive at the expense of the weak.

There's also the egotistical belief that western man can conquer all in his path, and also quite happily ruin the planet and his fellow men with no compulsion, as a guide remarks poignantly to Monroe; "If hell-holes like this didn't exist I'm sure you'd invent them."

Although the "ethics" of colonialist expansion have to some degree been successfully renounced, we still display a patronising attitude towards third world countries and smaller communities than our own, and man is still content to pillage the natural jungle environment in his relentless pursuit of financial gain.

virtual "TV battle" was waged by the squabbling stations - all eager to transform the horror of war into prime-time "entertainment" and so triumph in their own private ratings war.

Monroe's final question, "I wonder who the real cannibals are" offers us a salutary viewpoint on humanity, and our lack of it. *Cannibal Holocaust* is a powerful, but brazenly bleak film which paints a painfully severe picture of humanity's ravenous desire for self-destruction.

Deodato himself suffered something of a creative burn out following this, not surprisingly. In the intervening period he has only briefly returned to the jungle for films such as *Cat and Rat* (1984),

"Today people want sensationalism. The more you rape their senses the happier they are."

preferring more mainstream titles such as *The Phantom of Death* (1986), *The Barbarians* (1988) and *Dial Help* (1989).

Disappointingly, the once much-touted sequel to *Cannibal Holocaust*, *Cannibal Fury*, was announced but never made, ditto his history of zombie movies, *Voodoo Revenge* - an intriguing idea and something I'm sure would have been fascinating to see.

Even if Deodato, as it currently seems, is unable to scale the dizzying heights of emotional angst portrayed in *Cannibal Holocaust*, he will still be remembered for leaving his indelible mark behind on not just the cannibal film genre, but on the film world and society as a whole - even those diametrically opposed to it, cannot deny the resonance of *Cannibal Holocaust*.

"Even those diametrically opposed to it, cannot deny the resonance of Cannibal Holocaust."

4TH INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF FANTASTIC FILMS

**Sacha's Hotel, Tib Street,
Manchester**

September 10th-12th 1993

Over 35 films to be shown.
Guests include Caroline Munro
and Peter Atkins.

Tel: 061 929 1423 for info.



Whatever your views on NECRONOMICON I'd like to hear them whether they be good, bad or just plain ugly! Or, if you want to air your views on wider aspects of the horror/fantasy genre then let's hear from you - all letters to the following address:

Evil Writes
15 Jubilee Road
NEWTON ABBOT
Devon
TQ12 1LB

Dear Mr Black,

Thanks for issue 1 of "Necronomicon", which seems to be well up to "Satanstom" (in Exterminator/Giallo Pages standard) I look forward to issue 2.

I don't know whether the comments of a new reader are of interest, but here goes:

PLUS POINTS:-

1. Quality of illustrations - excellent. I was particularly impressed by the clarity and size of reproduced stills - a point on which too many fanzines fall down.

2. Editorial policy - I heartily agree with the decision to concentrate on older material. Many magazines don't seem to realise that the audience for 80's style "splatter" and older horror are substantially different. I know I'm not alone in seeing a declining standard after the early 80's as special effects take over from the creation of atmosphere and films appear to be aimed more and more explicitly at a teenage audience.

3. Film reviews - a good selection and intelligently handled (further below for a quibble).

4. Vpoco interview - excellent. Nice to see as well that you were prepared to give a Vpoco distributed film (Lund's *Eaten Alive*) an indifferent review.

5. *Living Dead At The Manchester Morgue* - good to see this excellent film given more than the faint praise it usually receives. It is not simply an inferior copy of Romero's over-praised *Night of the Living Dead*.

MINUS POINTS:-

1. I think that the coverage of TV-based material (eg *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.*) and mainstream fantasy (Fu Manchu and Sherlock Holmes) belongs elsewhere. I appreciate your editorial calls for diversity but other magazines specialise in this material to a

degree which will not be possible in "Necronomicon", and to my mind it rather disrupts the "feel" of the magazine to come across an article on this material alongside reviews of *Beavis*, *Aranda* etc.

2. Presentation of film reviews could be improved. The ideal is the "Sight and Sound" format of full technical and cast listings followed by a plot synopsis and *assessable* comment. If this can't be achieved could you at least list title as originally released (eg *La Noiva Essanguinante*), country of origin, alternative titles, director and cinematographer, screenwriter and principal cast members? Also the *listing* of the review copy?

Paul Bowes
Swinton
Manchester

Phew! Thanks for the comments Paul. I'd particularly like to hear from readers if they find the diversity here *egg-jarring*. I don't plan to start listing full credits etc. as this simply takes up too much space but I'd certainly consider incorporating brief title details and credits if there's enough feedback on this.

Dear Andy,

Many thanks for my copy of "Necronomicon". What you have here is a wonderfully written, nicely produced and well balanced magazine.

I know we share a common love of zombie movies and it was your book "Zombies" a most excellent read by the way! - (I see, the *chapters* in the post I ed), that moved me to send for "Necro".

The only print of *The Living Dead* I've seen is the European Creative Films print that's available at the moment so it was great to see some stills of the missing scenes.

As for the other articles -

Hammer's *Brides of Dracula* - the more Hammer the better!!

The *Rollin* article, all I can say is I'd like to hear more about his work and where I may possibly get my hands on some (*Redemption Video* have the rights to all *Rollin*'s vampire films which are due for release during the next year - sq).

I read the *Sherlock Holmes* article with

relish as this particular film is one of the best Holmes treatments I have seen. I await articles on Rathbone with bated breath.

The *U.N.C.L.E.* page I could do without but this is a minor gripe in an otherwise perfect publication.

Please, please, please more *Barra*, more *Falco*, some *Scovi* and if you must cover *Argento* (the absolute master film-maker) let's have a refreshing new approach to his work, though topping John Martin's "Magic all around us" in "Satanstom" will be a very hard task indeed.

I am also very glad to see that "Necro" will be a Jason & Freddy free zone. The two film series of these two characters I feel have diminished the horror genre to mere parody.

PS. Any plans for an article on "Godzilla" as I've got this real soft spot for the ugly great lizard.

Andy Jones
Stoke-on-Trent

No plans for any *Godzilla* yet unless you fancy out there want to persuade me otherwise!

Dear Andy,

Thanks very much for the copy of "Necronomicon" which I thoroughly enjoyed. The *Living Dead* is one of my favourites and in fact, we will be looking at it in "We Belong Dead" '95.

There was a really interesting mixture of articles and reviews. Nice to see the underrated *Brides of Dracula*. There, definitely one of Hammer's best vampire films. Another favourite of mine is *Murder By Decree* so it was good to see a lengthy article on that. Although Stephen Knight's case for the identity of the Ripper is full of holes, it makes an interesting story. As Ripperologist Robin Odell has said, when we are all standing in heaven and the identity of the Ripper is at last revealed, we'll all go "who?"!! I also have to admit I enjoyed the *Love Eater* review!

Eric McLaughlin
Nottingham

As most of you are no doubt aware, Eric edits the excellent *Hammer zine "WSD"* and will, I hope, be contributing Hammer articles to future editions of "Necronomicon".

Dracula

Considered by many to be the very best Dracula film of all, Hammer's usual panache and period flair are well to the fore as the arch vampire faces his nemesis, in the shape of crucifix-wielding Van Helsing.

"The Castle appeared innocuous enough in the warm afternoon sun. All seemed normal but for one thing, there were no birds singing." (Jonathan Harker in *Dracula*).

A couple of brief sentences maybe but they speak volumes for Hammer's vibrant presentation of Bram Stoker's supreme vampire villain. It's one of filmdom's great paradoxes that a company so vilified for its "lashings" of sex and gore should be equally championed for its often understated approach to horror and its much vaunted attention to period minutiae.

Both factors loom large in what for many (myself included) would suggest as the best overall film adaptation of "Dracula".

Coppola's version effuses a myriad of colours, Herzog's exhibits a dream-like atmosphere, Kurosawa's, a heightened sexual tension and Murnau's an eerie chaiscouro-dominated influence, but Terence Fisher's *Dracula* is an amalgamation of many of these qualities, coupled with performances and action sequences which render it an utterly convincing and memorable experience.

Whilst not a verbatim retelling of Stoker's landmark tale, it does capture the diverse central themes and

redefines them, also redesigning key areas of the script to produce a taut, more overtly dynamic reading to satisfy the requisite demands of the cinema.

The horror fantasy aspect inherent in the story is deliberately underplayed here in favour of a cogent, equally resilient theme of abnormality intruding into everyday normality - it's as if a shadow is continually insinuating itself into every frame, a creeping malevolence which will not be denied.

It is Bernard Robinson's richly fashioned sets and attention to detail which enables this insidious menace to flourish, cultivating an atmosphere of civilised calm only for it to be later undermined by Dracula's unmanly evil.

As Harker (John Van Eyssen) journeys to Castle Dracula he glimpses the imposing gargoyles and Gothic architecture, dismissing the cold, chill air as being "due no doubt to the icy waters of the mountain torrent I had just crossed."

These innocent thoughts will later evaporate in the presence of the Count - an earlier camera pan over his crypt revealing the words "Dracula" emblazoned on a coffin, before blood oozes over it hideously in the shape of a cross. It is a salient reminder that faith in God will be needed to defeat the vampire, but on its own, may not be enough. The dripping blood is also a mocking parallel to the avowedly religious symptoms of the stigmata.

Fisher's handling of the Count's initial appearance (played imperiously by Christopher Lee), is equally masterful, accentuating a deliberate air of ambiguity as instead of seeing some kind of fiendish miscreant as expected, it is an urbane, cultivated gentleman who glides down the main staircase and into view

warmly welcoming Harker. Despite this well-mannered persona, we learn of Harker's true intent - not to act as the Count's librarian as he spontaneously announces, but to end the Count's "reign of terror" which also spreads to a vampirised girl (Valene Giant), whom Harker encounters. His own inevitable demise at the hands of the Count is signalled by the ominous shadow looming across the crypt wall as the door slams shut, plunging the room into darkness - a virtual eclipse indicating Harker's imminent death.

The grandiose setting of *Dracula's* opulent castle, with its labyrinth corridors, marble archways and exquisite decor is then momentarily displaced by the rather more prosaic society encapsulated by the Holmwood residence, across a continent in the book, but merely across a border in the film - a plot conceit which adds greatly to the film's kinetic finale.

Intruding into this society of civilised behaviour and etiquette, we find both *Dracula* and Van Helsing (Peter Cushing), with the latter "fresh" from slaking the vampirised Harker, and with the unenviable task of informing both Harker's fiancée, Lucy (Carol Marsh),





and her parents, Arthur and Mina Holmwood (Michael Gough & Melissa Stribling), of his untimely death.

From here on in, Van Helsing has to race against time, and combat the initial intransigence of the Holmwoods in order to "release" the vampirised Lucy from her undead state and finally to rescue Mina. In a gripping climax, Van Helsing tracks Dracula back to his family lair, ingeniously defeating him by dashing across a refectory table, tearing back the drapes and forging a crucifix from two nearby candlesticks - the vampire now trapped in the shafts of sunlight which flood the room, causing him to disintegrate. Only a mound of dust and a solitary ring left behind as stirring music rings chimes out, wind rustles through the remnants and stained glass windows evoke a crusading, ecclesiastical motif.

Besides this exhilarating final flourish, the latter stages of the film are most memorable for Van Helsing's attempts to alert the unsuspecting Holmwoods of the heinous vampire evil they are about to face, and for Dracula's gradual immolation of innocent souls using the guise of erotic pleasure to conceal the execrable pain his bite will signify.

Van Helsing, "a very eminent man" we are informed, attempts to educate those around him, placating a local innkeeper with the salutory notice that "This is more than superstition I know, the danger is very real" explaining that "the whole world will benefit" if his purge on vampirism is successful.

As if to prove the point, Dracula's later appearance at Lucy's bedside

evokes not screams of fear but sighs of rapture as this tall, dark and handsome Prince of Darkness prepares to feast upon Lucy's now unfettered feminine spirit. His arrival - signalled by Autumnal leaves floating outside the window, rippling music and the sight of Lucy excitedly readying herself, lying breathless on the bed, and inviting the vampire's deadly caress.

The sensual appeal and relative calm of the vampire contrasts vividly with the seemingly barbaric instructions which Van Helsing is obliged to give. This contrast, and the moral dilemma the protagonists face, is chillingly pre-figured as Arthur accompanies Van Helsing on a midnight vigil over Lucy's grave. They see the spectral figure of Lucy enticing her little sister to her side, before Van Helsing's outstretched crucifix repels her, burning her flesh. Van Helsing's clinical, scientific mind immediately realises that the mesmerised Lucy can lead them to the vampire's lair, but Arthur's understandable reaction to not wanting his sister "possessed by evil" a second longer "finds humanity triumphing over reason in an emotive scene."

Their subsequent stalking of Lucy, though outwardly barbaric, offers a spiritual release as Van Helsing reminds Arthur that "This is not Lucy the sister you loved, it is only a shell, possessed and corrupted by the evil of Dracula. To liberate her soul and give her eternal peace we must destroy that shell, for all time. Believe me, there is no other way." In clear vindication of these words we then witness Lucy's vampiric counte-

nance fade as her natural beauty returns. It is the emotional strength gained from this encounter which enables the duo to eventually seek out and destroy Dracula, as Van Helsing's promise that "this unholy cult must be wiped out" is thankfully fulfilled.

The real success of Fisher's film stems from the lucid script whose only departures from the novel are specifically crafted in order to enhance its cinematic appeal by condensing the action and so intensifying its dramatic impact, and from Lee's majestic Dracula, Cushing's authoritative Van Helsing and a superbly ordered supporting cast.

Vampirism here is presented as a two-edged sword, sensual and alluring on a purely superficial level, but pernicious and unequivocally evil on a deeper level and therein lies our fascination with the vampire and our repulsion for his activities. As in other Hammer films, convincing action scenes carrying a considerable visceral impact, coupled with a prevailing essence of ruinous evil, show the plague of vampirism as a malignant threat to society, an omnipresent cancer ready to eat away at the very heart of civilisation, its bite lethal, its infection everlasting.

The phenomenal success of both Lee and Cushing in the leading roles furnished Hammer with a plethora of other vampire films, none quite matching the level of achievement here, but creating some interesting features in their own right, and of course, this film proved the benchmark by which all subsequent vampire films are judged - the ultimate accolade for what might just be the ultimate in vampire films, so far!



THE VAMPIRE LOVERS

The emphasis switches from the jugular to the bosom in Hammer Films sanguinary tale of vampirism and sexual awakening - Let the love-bites commence!

Hammer studios - never ones to let current trends and fashions pass them by, quickly realised that with the emergence of more explicit, "adult" orientated exploitation films during the permissive 1960's, so too must they increase the sexual content of their own films.

Very much in the vanguard as far as this more "enlightened" approach was concerned, *The Vampire Lovers* (1970), based on Sheridan Le Fanu's lesbian vampire "Carmilla", proved the lust-filled launch pad for a trilogy of like-minded films, with *Last For A Vampire* (1970) and *Twins of Evil* (1971) completing the licentious triumvirate.

If anything, the horror in these films is almost incidental, taking second place to the overt sensuality and libidinous desires which are elevated to centre stage.

It is the fulsome figure of Ingrid Pitt, portraying Carmilla (though in the guise of Marcalla/Marcilla here), whose sensitive nature lures both the willowy nubile, Laura (Pippa Steele) and Emma (Madeleine Smith), and whose sexual chemistry invigorates the more experienced Governess - (Kate O'Mara no less!).

As Carmilla insinuates herself into an aristocratic household, her singular nature and exotic desires permeate the walls, the corridors, the very air the

other girls breathe. Once safely installed, Carmilla's erotic fantasies begin to tease and torment the sleeping hours of both Laura and Emma, both eventually succumbing to the intoxicating mix of epicurean pleasures and peculiarly feminine fulfillment that Ingrid Pitt's vampire epitomises.

There's a kind of rhythmical fatality to these scenes as firstly young Laura is the recipient of Carmilla's nocturnal advances, loved and lusted after before eventually being drained of all her life-blood and left to die, with Emma then gently ushered in to be the next victim.

The girl's relative innocence and naivety provides a vivid contrast with Carmilla's more "worldly-wise" manner, Laura's appreciative "Marcalla, your so kind to me. I swear I shall die when you leave" proving to be ironic, whilst

Laura's anemic condition prior to her death is disguised as being due to a lack of "greens and red meat", to "put some blood back into her" the doctor orders, though without thinking of performing any transfusion!

Just as Carmilla's experience glaringly illustrates Emma's innocence, so too do her sumptuous dresses (which Emma tries on), indicate Carmilla's sophisticated society air as opposed to Emma's unassuming country traits.

Emma, now "pale and listless", slowly being drained by Carmilla's vampiric methods is warned, "You mustn't allow yourself to be terrorised by your own imagination" but Carmilla's fatal presence is very much removed from being mere fantasy. Having clearly expressed her disinterest for the male species, Carmilla implores Emma "to be







mine for all your life." The diametrically opposed natures of the two "lovers" is highlighted however, as Carmilla laments that "the sun is too bright for me, it burns my eyes", whilst Emma, conversely eulogises, "It's glorious, you can feel the warmth penetrating. It's like life."

It is now that Carmilla's all-consuming passion rises, sweeping up all in her path, as first Emma, then the governess are seduced by the hedonistic lure of the vampire.

A circular conclusion (echoing the film's brief prologue), sees a vampire-hunting Peter Cushing as General Selsdorf staking Carmilla, before then beheading her with a razor-edged sword.

As previously indicated, for a Hammer film, very little blood is spilt as the horror is very much restrained with the (now) unfettered sexuality more than compensating for the muted " gore" scenes.

The major horror atmospherics are contained in the prologue/conclusion passages as a shrouded vampire figure hovers menacingly in a fog-bound ancestral castle, a punting dissolving into a skeletal shape, symbolising the vampire's death - the nearby church with its shining stained glass windows providing a spiritual backdrop to the scene.

Despite Ingrid Pitt's stirring performance, complimented with Cushing's dynamic hunter, the film still falls shy

of truly exploring the burgeoning sexual passions of particularly the younger women in the film, or the puritanism of the pious father's who sadistically pursue the vampire to purge themselves of their own frustrations as much as any loftier motives of ridding the world of this deadly evil.

The soft-core lesbian couplings are also guilty of denigrating such fervently-felt emotions to the level of coy, giggling schoolgirl humour, which appears to be so archetypally English and seemingly forever to doom any semi-erotic picture made on these shores.



It is also indicative of the malaise surrounding the (premature) demise of the British "sex" film.

By co-producing the picture with the US version of Hammer - AIP, both companies sought to open up new boundaries, and more importantly, new commercial markets, but their eschewal of nationalistic constraints only serves ultimately in diluting the eternal strength of the vampire whose sensual exploits eclipse any more profound thematic concerns. The vampires parasitic power to supplant family bonding by bringing its own irresistible, in this case, matriarchal, dominance to bear remains unhindered.

Hammer were to encounter similar problems in later years as they unsuccessfully tried to surpass the occult regalia and possession pictures such as *The Exorcist* (1973) and *The Omen* (1976) with the convoluted *To the Devil - A Daughter* (1976), whilst the pot-pourri of western doctrine and oriental myths combined uneasily for *The Legend of the 7 Golden Vampires* (1974).

At least Pitt's alluring *femme fatale* - an open invitation to join the vampire legions, drew enough blood to mock the film's impotent plea that "before God may we be spared from these supernatural happenings again", as the vampire bloodline flows on undeterred.

LUST FOR A VAMPIRE

*Strange Love, voluptuous vampires, blood and sex.
Just your typical Hammer Film really !*

Hot on the heels of Ray Ward Baker's *The Vampire Lovers* (1970), Jimmy Sangster's *Last For A Vampire* (1970), is a starring sequel, with a more painterly visual style and a burgeoning eroticism which threatens to engulf the meagre plot without quite succeeding (more's the pity !)

Michael Johnson is the rather wooden English novelist, Richard Lestrange (oh dear !), whose journey into nineteenth century Styria for literary research, betrays decidedly more carnal interests as he invigiles himself into the nearby girls finishing school under the pretence of being a relief English teacher, though unofficially it is human biology where his main interests lie !

The object of his desires, (and every-one else's come to that) is the ravishing blonde actress Yutte Stengaard who plays the vampress Mircalla - yes, she of Shendai Le Fua's "Carmilla"

It's fair to say that her radiant looks have caused a few hearts to flutter and groins to tremble over the years but the same doesn't apply to her thespian "abilities" which remain perfunctory to say the least.

Her initial appearance, is equally breathtaking - a young maiden is sacrificed in the ancestral home of the Karnsteins, her throat slit open with a large sword as her crimson lifeblood spills into a gold chalice.

To the accompaniment of Count Karnstein's (Mike Raven) Latin incantations, the blood is poured upon a skeletal figure swathed in a shroud - "Turn now this fresh, warm blood into a body of thy making, this innocent spirit into evil", he intones. Then, lo and

behold, lightning flashes and heavenly singing erupts as the ruby liquid seeps through the shroud, transforming the skeletal outline into a "fleshed-out" figure (I'll say!) as the sheet quivers and a body rises - an arisal camera angle providing us with only a side profile to increase our anticipation.

Having "increased this dust of centuries", Mircalla then esconces herself in the nearby finishing school, its array of girls and lecherous tutors her new victims in waiting



Unfortunately, this impressive opening scene is never matched by any of the subsequent events the film supplies which consist mainly of schoolgirl fumbles, schoolboy immaturity and an inevitability to the eventual outcome as Mircalla and her guardians are incarcerated in their castle by a torch-wielding mob, whose presence irritates Universal's "Frankenstein" series during the 1930's.

Given that the horror elements of the

film are relatively few and far between, it's to the eroticism inherent in the story that we turn to for "spiritual enlightenment" and cheap thrills !

In fact, the titillation present here is just that, serving only to whet the appetite as opposed to satiating it.

Stengaard, equipped with her azure blue dress and quaint bonnet, exudes a "butter wouldn't melt in her mouth" (but blood presumably would) look as she entices her victims, beguiling her room-mate with her fatal caresses

Mircalla's sanguinary "charms" also account for Ralph Bates' egotistic lecherer (sorry, lecturer!). Giles, who upon learning the vampire's true identity pleads; "I want only to worship you. To be your servant. A servant of the Devil." (Looking at Ms. Stengaard he's got a point !).

The most priceless moment here is when Mircalla, clad in virginal white, gently removes the glasses from her willing victim, before engorging herself on her prey amongst the mist-shrouded graveyard setting.

Giles' inevitable self-destruction is more interestingly mirrored by the near-destruction of Le Strange who also allows the vampire's allure and his own romanticism to cloud his judgement when inviting Mircalla's deadly caresses.

The writer, who by his own admission sees the witches and vampires in the fiction he writes as being merely "A product of my own imagination", now has this belief thrown back at him as Mircalla challenges him; "Is the famous writer Richard Le Strange a peasant at heart. Do you believe in your own mystery and imagination ?"

This mingling existential dilemma is then rudely dissipated by the musical strains of "Strange Love", which usually evokes laughter rather than passion as it bursts forth inappropriately onto the soundtrack and the mood is lost.

The idea that we can invite evil, somehow welcome the devil and with him, the seeds of our own destruction, is one of the more engaging ideas in the film, with Le Strange's melancholic outlook on occasions suggesting the kind of forlorn figure usually reserved for Greek Tragedy.

It is the primal instinct for survival as exhibited by the enraged locals, and divine intervention which defeats the creatures as for once, the ecclesiastical world defeats the secular world as a doctor remarks poignantly, "We are talking about matters beyond science, about the dark imaginings of man, about metaphysics, the nature of good and evil. You don't need a doctor, you need...". his words trail off as a priest enters the room.

The "predatory" aspect of the female



vampire, usually *de rigueur* in these films is only fleetingly glimpsed here when Le Strange first enters the Karnstein castle only to be encircled by a group of stealthily advancing, hooded figures, but

fear turns to relief as they are revealed to be the local students from the girls school - never the less, the ambiguity here suggests the dual nature of evil and its intoxicating influence.

With all this groping around, there's precious little in the way of social commentary to weigh the film down but a thinly veiled class bias is revealed as the school governess cordially welcomes Le Strange into the fold because he is "the son of a Lord", but her later inaction when girl students begin to go missing is "spurred" not by any altruistic thoughts of protecting their parents' feelings, but by a desire to protect her own investment in the school by keeping it free of scandal.

When a foreign student does disappear, the local police official warns her, "This girl is a visitor here. A guest in this country. There could be serious political consequences."

As mentioned though, this strand of reasoning and its ramifications are left undeveloped in favour of highlighting the considerably developed charms of the seductive Miralla.

If the face of evil is always this enticing then we'd all be renouncing religion and moving to a warmer climate, forsaking the pearly gates and heaven's angels to indulge in more worldly pleasures!



NOSFERATU

Werner Herzog's masterly *Nosferatu* is unearthed by Necronomicon's own vampiric scribe, Pagan, who also sinks her fangs into the "unofficial" sequel, Augusto Caminito's *Vampire in Venice*.

Who will survive and what will be left of them? Read on.....

The "nosferatu" can never die, and neither, it seems, will attempts to produce the definitive vampire movie, especially if Francis Ford Coppola's recent venture is anything to go by. However, in my opinion at least, it would take something extraordinarily spectacular to surpass the beauty of Werner Herzog's masterpiece, *Nosferatu-The Vampire* (1979).

The film is a remake of the German silent classic, *Nosferatu* (1922), directed by Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau, which was banned after legal wrangles with Bram Stoker's widow, and although the court ordered all copies of the film to be destroyed, fortunately some survived.

The earlier version starred Max Schreck as the evil count, with his rat-like teeth and sunken eyes. Schreck's stilted movement gives a constant sense of *rigor mortis*, and his glazed eyes suggest a creature in a state of schizophrenia.

Schreck plays the count as the embodiment of pure evil - he seems to be in complete control, masterfully calculating every move he makes. It is impossible to feel any compassion for the vampire, and he is seen only as being evil unleashed upon an unsuspecting world.

Klaus Kinski however, changes the whole tone of the film with his portrayal of Dracula in the remake.

Softly spoken, nervous and apologetic, he has two desires, neither of which can ever be fulfilled. His primary wish is to be able to die. He tells both Jonathan (Bruno Ganz) and Lucy (Isabelle Adjani), that death is nothing compared to the torments of immortality. "To be unable to grow old is terrible." If he cannot die he has another wish - to partake of the love shared between Jonathan and Lucy.

His need for true love can be seen in the way in which he drains the blood from Lucy, with a tenderness and gentleness, at odds with the violence that one might expect.

Kinski manages to evoke pity in us, and it is impossible not to feel compassion for him. He seems to be constantly battling with himself, trying to keep his bloodlust under control.

The vampire here is himself a victim, plagued by this all-consuming illness. It is an illness that is both mental and physical, emphasised throughout both versions of the film.

However, in Herzog's film, mental illness becomes a far more disturbing feature. Herzog cuts a number of scenes from the original in which Renfield, the estate agent who employs Jonathan and is responsible for sending him to Dracula's castle, is later committed to a mental

institution. In Herzog's version, Renfield is equally disturbing simply because he is free, and highly unpredictable.

Even more disturbing however, are the dream-like sequences in the town, as Lucy is surrounded by people dancing and eating "a last supper" amidst the bodies and coffins of the dead. As they attempt to draw her into their dark festivities, the borders between illusion and reality, sanity and madness become blurred.

The townsfolk are victims of the plague mentally, even before it physically attacks them. This is a danger Lucy also faces - it would be easy for her too, to see her death as part of an inevitable pattern of events, something she is powerless against, especially when the deterioration of Jonathan from his previous sanity and good health is so obvious. Eventually however, it is her strength and her love for Jonathan which enables her to destroy Dracula.

It is interesting that in the original version, Murnau selected scenes from Bram Stoker's novel and altered the main storyline dramatically.

In the novel Lucy dies, becomes a vampire and is later destroyed, and it is Mina who then becomes the focus of Dracula's attention.





Also, it is interesting. Van Helming, Jonathan and the other men who are responsible for the ultimate destruction of the vampire.

In Murnau's adaptation, it is Lucy who has the power to destroy the vampire, as, in one of the greatest deviations from Stoker's work, it is * a woman, pure of heart, who gives her blood freely to the vampire and keeps him there until after the cock crows, * who is able to end the creature's reign.

Herzog retains this section of the film, but because of Kinski's portrayal of Dracula, the destruction of the vampire is not the triumph over evil that it symbolises in the earlier version.

Instead, it is an inevitable ending to a pattern of events which is out of control and our sympathies lie with both Lucy and the vampire. Herzog also adds a final twist to the conclusion which enables the "nosferatu" to live on and so permeate future sequels.

The most salient images however, remain the ethereal mountain landscapes of the vampire's country, the haunting music from Popol Vuh and Florian Packer, together with the poignant shot of the vampire's sail-boat drifting into view - its prow cutting through the calm waters to signify the imminent threat of the vampire's insidious presence.

Of the (so far) solitary sequel, it is unfortunate then that Kinski's resurrection in *Vampire in Venice* (1988), does not live up to its predecessor.

The "nosferatu" has become the title of a single vampire rather than an entire

species, and Kinski returns as a creature of total evil, awakened by a seance, killing priests and mocking the sign of the cross.

The tender, suffering vampire of Herzog's film has turned into a purely satanic figure and the sheer beauty and artistry which so informed *Nosferatu - The Vampyre*, with its awe-inspiring shots of natural scenery and scenes with Adjani which could have been taken straight from the Pre-Raphaelites, are also lost.

Considered on it's own, *Vampire in Venice* is an excellent vampire movie, but it remains entirely in the shadow of Herzog's *Nosferatu - The Vampyre*, which stands out as a veritable work of art, and, in my opinion, remains the greatest vampire film ever made.

Pagan



AMERICAN 111



ZOMBIES -

FILMS THAT CALL THE DEAD TO RISE

*'Exhilarating and entertaining' -
Sharon Hudson*

*Fulci & Romero zombies, Italian
gut-crunchers, oriental gore,
early classics and many more!*

*All in this A5, perfect bound
book with over 120 pages,
including 16 pages of stills.*

*Available from the author at the
Necronomicon address - £9.75
per copy (inc. p&pt).*



The mercurial Spanish director has repeatedly delved into the Dracula mythology to supplement his diverse oeuvre with titles such as *Dracula Prisoner of Frankenstein* and *La Dracula et Filles* springing most readily to mind, but *El Conde Dracula* marked his avowed intent to finally furnish Christopher Lee with the definitive Dracula role, both in physical appearance and in characterisation and script.

This admirable purpose however, flounders with the zoom-inducing financial constraints of a shoestring budget and an array of no less than five writers, each of whose creative input is considerably diluted as a result.

Claims of literary accuracy prove spurious as one of Stoker's main protagonists, Arthur Holmwood is omitted from the film entirely, whilst Franco's occasional stylistic flourishes are tarnished by repeated shots of Renfield (Klaus Kinski) gazing from his asylum cell towards the Count's lair opposite.

It's not all gloom and doom though because Franco's film does follow the source novel quite closely in other respects and true to his word, does at least portray the Count as an ageing, white-haired and mustachioed figure to ensure physical authenticity.

Where *El Conde Dracula* does sometimes fail is in its stilted dialogue and plodding pace - there are few dynamic sequences in the film, giving Lee's arch vampire little to do, a disappointing waste of his authoritative demeanour and commanding screen presence.

It is Lee, ably supported by his egregious servant Renfield, who give the

El Conde Dracula

*"Now, for the first time,
we retell Bram Stoker's
Dracula exactly as he
wrote it."*

*An impressive claim, but
when the film in question
is Jess Franco's, you know
what to expect from the
Spanish maestro!*

film's best performances. True to the spirit of the novel, Lee does begin the film as an archaic figure, only to appear progressively younger with each victim's blood providing him with the necessary "elixir of youth".

Dracula's all-important first appearance on screen is well handled by Franco as Lee's suitably mysterious, shadowed coachman floats into view to pick up the frightened Harker (Frederick Williams).

This is then the cue for the "children of the night" to get carried away slightly as wolves howl, voices groan, birds shriek and the audience cringe!

Upon entering Castle Dracula, Harker is cordially welcomed by the Count, but not the austere stone rooms and cold castle walls whose spartan milieu is at odds with the warming fires which glow in Stoker's book.

Franco's annoying habit of instantly zooming into faces whenever the words "Count Dracula" are uttered is rather more effectively employed here as a close-up of Lee ushers in the Count's most memorable, rather baleful speech.

"The shadows of my past remain here. We are the second Magyars, we have a right to remain proud, for in us flows the blood of many brave races, the blood of Attila is in these veins. To us was entrusted for centuries, the guardianship of our lands. The Lombard, the Bulgar, the Turk poured their thousands against our frontiers - we drove them back."

The Dracula's have ever been the heart's blood, the brains, the sword of our people. One of our race crossed the Danube and destroyed the Turkish host. Though sometimes beaten back, he

came again and again against the enemy until at the end he came alone from the bloody field for he alone could triumph. This was a Dracula indeed. But now the wind blows coldly through the broken battlements. But although this is my home I must move on."

Having thus powerfully established Dracula's heroic ancestry, the action then switches to Van Helsing's (Herbert Lom) clinic in London where a now vampirised Harker awakes. Even within the convalescent environment here, the Count's insidious influence penetrates as the tortured soul of Renfield awaits his master's arrival with anticipation and revulsion - a truly tormented figure who appears reconciled to his unholy fate.

In a moment of rare horror Mina (Marian Rohn), then enters Lucy's (Soledad Miranda) bedroom only to find the Count engorging himself on his victim, his blood smeared face seemingly mocking the sanctity of the life which he proves so adept at stealing.

Dracula's final confrontation with Van Helsing eschews this visceral approach in favour of a momentarily ideological battle as the scientist explains that, "All my life I've studied the Black Arts. It's strange to finally confront the Prince of Darkness himself", with Dracula countering, "You've learnt much. You can do nothing."

A cross fashioned from furs saves Van Helsing from his doom but equally enables the Count to escape, whereupon he is chased back to his ancestral lair where gregorian chants herald the appearance of a torch-lit procession of locals who ambush the vampires en masse - his coffin now engulfed in flames and tipped over the castle battlements to perish below.

"Whilst the Count lives, time and space have very little meaning", besides being Van Helsing's profound comment here, also indicates to us the real failure of Franco's film. While the picture does successfully establish the

"The shadows of my past remain here. We are the second Moggers, we have a right to remain proud, for in us flows the blood of many brave races, the blood of Attila is in these veins."
(Count Dracula)



Count's regal history, it singularly fails to portray the Count's inner misery - that he is condemned to live for eternity, a lonely, unloved "master" for whom not even death can provide a merciful release.

The motivation for his actions are left undeveloped, unexplained. He is simply required by Franco to exist, with the unenviable result of being forced almost to act as if in a vacuum,

receiving little backing from the supporting cast. Perhaps if Franco had been able to sustain a more supernatural, dream-like atmosphere then the film would have succeeded. Instead there is only an infrequent "suspension of disbelief" on the audience's part and precious little in the way of any pathos-inspiring moments to ponder over.

Only isolated scenes carry any resonance, of Lucy's black-clad figure, beckoning to a child before then leading her from an ornate graveyard and off into the distant woods, and presumably, the child's doom. Or, the stuffed animals who threaten to become animate and whose screams signal Dracula's dramatic appearance in one scene.

These moments aside, *El Conde Dracula* simply cannot overcome the poverty of its script and budget, "radiating cheapness" as one critic commented upon the film's initial release, which is a major disappointment given the potential quality of the cast that Franco managed to assemble here.

Who knows, if Franco had been allowed more time and more money then maybe *El Conde* could have lived up to its ambitious claims as being the authentic Dracula film - as it stands, the film remains the perfect example of Franco's enigmatic film-making.

Harbour Frights 93

26-27 June at the Rex cinema, Wareham, Dorset. Starts midnight and £19.50 to Voodoo Penguin Ltd. 82 York Road, Bournemouth, Poole, BH18 8EU.

DANCE

OF THE VAMPIRES

The unusual sight of vampires quite literally "having a ball", (even if not exactly "putting on the Ritz") can be seen in Roman Polanski's enigmatic vampire comedy as snow flakes mingle with blood amongst the Italian Dolomite mountains.

The term "horror comedy" is usually a terrifying prospect for all the wrong reasons, namely that the horror becomes diluted and the humour lacklustre. If you try recalling the more memorable films from this particularly problematic sub-genre, then only the likes of *Young Frankenstein* (1974) and *The Return of the Living Dead* (1985) will spring readily to mind.

Polanski's own brand of horror comedy lacks the outrageous humour of the Mel Brooks film and the sheer verve of Dan O'Bannon's, being an altogether more subtle parody of the (at the time) hugely successful Gothic horror's produced by Hammer Films.

Instead, of Hammer's ornate period productions and sumptuous costumes, Polanski relies on a succession of tight gags, near slapstick and minimalist settings (basically a castle and an inn), to gently mock the paucity of the mainly shoestring budgets of the time.

This combination has led certain unkind critics to condemn the film as being "excessively laboured, more clumsy than comic", but this is a rather severe reading of this mildly amusing film, where any explicit horror is purposefully implied rather than shown.

Italy's Dolomite mountains provide the snowbound setting for the film as two "fearless vampire killers", Alfred



(Polanski himself) and Professor Abronsius (Jack MacGowran) stumble their way into the vampire lair of Count von Krolock (Ferdie Mayne).

Their bungling attempts to dispose of Krolock and his gay vampire son, Herbert (Ian Quamer) flounder, whilst their rescue of a young maiden, Sarah (Sharon Tate), ultimately fails when having survived the titular evening dance of the undead, they flee only for the now vampirised Sarah to infect both Alfred and Abronsius.

As the film's narrator succinctly concludes: "That night, fleeing from Transylvania, Professor Abronsius never guessed he was carrying away with him the very evil that he had wished to

destroy. Thanks to him, this evil would at last be able to spread across the world."

The irony implicit here is completely in keeping with the largely irrelevant tone of the piece. After all, it's amusing to think how over the years Stoker's novel and Hollywood movies have laid down the rules of vampirism, the fiends own *modus operandi* if you will, and we have all been comprehensively suckered into believing everything that we see. I'm sure that Stoker would





appreciate the gullibility of us all and allow himself a small chuckle in his (undead ?) grave!

It is these very rules of engagement which Polanski most noticeably enjoys poking fun at, although the important distinction here is that we laugh with the characters and not at them, unlike of the majority of other such (intended) satires.

As such, the genre conventions are continually usurped and transformed into parody. Take the "intrepid" duo, Abronsius and Alfred - not exactly the fearsome foe of which Van Helsing's are moulded.

Abronsius can't even combat the chilling native climate, never mind the arch vampire, Krolock, as he is hurriedly "thawed" inside the inn having been found frozen stiff outside. Although now "animate" again, Abronsius doesn't exactly "warm" to his task of tracking the vampires, first becoming stuck in one of the castle turrets, tripping down stairs and later, leaning unknowingly on a cannon - his most obvious means of escape from the tower he finds himself imprisoned in!

His "expertise" on the subject of vampirism is in the form of a tome he has published, "The Bat and it's Mysteries" (!), and his reaction when informed by Alfred of Herbert's vampire not casting a reflection in a mirror is, "I'd love to have seen that."

The urbane, sophisticated Count also delights in imposing his superior intellect upon the "learned" Professor with "fang-in-cheek" asides, ditto, "I had an Aunt who was a sleepwalker" and "I'm a night bird - I'm not much good in the daytime."

Even when Abronsius does show his mastery of vampire lore it is to comic effect as he immediately uncovers the bites on a victim in one scene - found not on the neck as expected but at the bottom of the legs and other freakish places.

Scenes of Abronsius and Alfred smoking around the outside of the castle, black specs amidst the snow-laden setting, recall the matchstick men of the punner Lowry as well as Max Schreck's rodent-like portrayal of *Nosferatu* (1922) - not quite the image you'd expect from these would-be vampire slayers.

In similar vein, the pebbish Alfred, when ordered to stake the sleeping Count Krolock retorts, "Oh no, not that master, please," - echoes of a certain insect-gulping Renfield I believe!

The catfish Alfred however, provides an equal number of farcical moments - his initial appearance, riding a sleigh and frantically trying to fend off a pack of baying huskies, sets the tone, as does his meekish expression when ogling the shapely features of Sarah as she bathes.

His attempts to stake Alfie Bass's Jewish vampire fail as he only succeeds in spearing a vat of wine - it's crimson liquid gushing symbolically free, whilst

his flight from Herbert's fey vampire is short-lived with Alfred running full circle round the castle landing to once again face the grinning vampire. Then there's the sight of Bass's Jewish blood-sucker mocking a crucifix vainly brandished in front of him - "You've got the wrong vampire" is his response, whilst elsewhere the pungent smell of garlic only succeeds in suffocating all mortals as opposed to repelling the immortal vampires.

The most impressive scenes however, are those detailing the film's vampires in their various incarnations. Krolock's suave Count is the orator for the vampire's cause proclaiming, "Soon we will be victorious and triumphant. We shall then hold sway over this earth which awaits our coming as autumn awaits winter."

Polanski's most lyrical passages also feature the Count as his gaunt face is pressed against Sarah's window, later descending through the roof and into her bath to claim her - white snowflakes silently falling into the now rapidly reddening water.

Similarly snowbound frames capture the amassed undead climbing from their graves ready to join the vampire ball, itself a burlesquely-mounted dance of "manners and etiquette", it's thinly veiled attack on aristocratic society (parasitic vampires also maybe), itself curtailed with the startling appearance of Sarah from behind some drapes - resplendent in a vivid ruby dress.

The ghoul's make-up here is as effective as that seen in the majority of



"serious" horror pictures of the time, and Abbot and Alfie's attempts to join the dance are appropriately scuppered by vampire lore as the assorted creatures cast no reflection in the bell-room mirror - unlike our "intrepid" heroes!

Although traces of Kniff-Ebeng are present with the depiction of vampires here as being some kind of sexual disease/perversion - Sarah and Herbert both use their differing sexuality to "lure" potential victims, the overriding impression is that Polanski has created an inventive epic, self-indulgent and pedantic in parts, but visually appealing and humorous enough to forgive such minor flaws.

Dance also boasts one of horror-dom's most visual and exquisite scores - courtesy of Krzysztof Komeda's Eastern-orientated melodies and gregorian chanting.

It's also entirely appropriate that the expected MGM lion logo which introduces the film credits should unexpectedly transform into a green-tinted imp - it's an indication of Polanski's own man-chuevious desire to poke a stake at the relatively solemn conventions of vampire lore.

Alfred may miss all of his targets but at least Polanski's film strikes all of its intended victims and objectives.

The greatest horror in fact, was to be provided later, not by the film but by the notorious Charles Manson gang who shortly after the film, killed the unfortunate Sharon Tate - a most untimely death if ever there was one and making her appearance in *Dance* all the more poignant.



DELIRIUM ISSUE ONE OUT NOW!

£2.75

DELIRIUM is the most complete guide to Italian Exploitation Cinema ever written. *Part One* covers 1970-1974 and includes credits and alternative titles for films such as *Witches Of The Lake*, *Deborah*, *Autopsy*, *The Red Headed Corpse*, *Faura*, *Killers Of The Castle Of Blood*, *Nude Per Satana*, *Four Flies On Grey Velvet*, *Excite Me*, *Demons Sexuelle*, *Naked And Violent* and over 150 other horror, giallo, sci-fi, mondo and WIP movies.

Containing, as it does, many rare stills and ad mags plus selected review capsules and a useful index, DELIRIUM is a must for any enthusiast of Italian Cinema. But hurry as DELIRIUM has a limited print run of only 500 copies.

For your copy of DELIRIUM send £2.75 (inc P&P) to:-
MEDIA PUBLICATIONS, 26 Salford Road, Old Marston,
Oxford, OX3 0RY, ENGLAND

DELIRIUM ISSUE ONE

Contains credits and aliases for over 150 horror, giallo, mondo, sci-fi and WIP movies



The complete guide to
Italian Exploitation Cinema
Part One 1970 - 1974

DAUGHTERS OF DARKNESS

Harvey Fenton delves into the decadent world of European vampires and encounters the eternal appeal of the legendary Countess Bathory.

A Belgian/French/West German co-production filmed in Belgium in 1971, *La Rouge Aux Levres* (more widely known as *Daughters of Darkness* and filmed as "Erzebeth") is writer/director Harry Kume's visually stunning entry into the peculiarly European strain of female vampire pictures which were the horror sensation of the seventies.

The trend during the late sixties towards increasingly erotic horror films found its logical conclusion in 1970 through the films of Hammer (*Countess Dracula*, *Lust for a Vampire* and *The Vampire Lovers*), Jean Rollin (*Le Frisson Des Vampires*) and Jesus Franco (*Vampiros Lesbos* *Die Erbin Des Dracula*). This trend continued unabated throughout the decade, highlighted by the likes of Hammer's *Twins of Evil* and Rollin's *Requiem Pour Un Vampire* (both 1971), Vincente Aran-
do's *Lo Novia Enamantada/The Blood Splattered Bride* and Jorge Oru's *Ceremonia Sangrienta/Legend of Blood Castle* (both 1972) and Rollin's *Levres De Sang* (1975). A decade's worth of blood-sucking females was capped in fine style by Jean Rollin, the genre's most prolific exponent, with his 1979 entry *Fascination*.

The sex appeal of the vampire has always been an important component

of the whole mythos of course - vampirism is after all, by it's very nature, symbolically a sexual act. The essential seduction and compliance of the victim, the willingness of that victim to surrender control of their body to a predator who usually makes its approach at night, invariably invited into the victim's own bed, where they succumb to the consummating penetration and sharing of bodily fluids, is undeniably sexual



in every respect. Truly the ultimate one-night stand! Bringing the sexual element of the vampire myth to the fore with the addition of beautiful, scantily clad, sexually adventurous blood-drinking *femme fatales* made explicit what had, up to this point, merely been hinted at.

The fact that so many of these films chose to concentrate on the female form, often to the almost total exclusion of

males, even as victims, is not a surprise given the male-dominated film industry. What is of interest though, is the overtly lesbian overtones of the femme vampire genre, on first appearances mere testament to the peculiar voyeuristic fascination which lesbianism holds for so many heterosexuals.

Many films of this genre introduced the lesbian angle purely to satisfy the craving for decorative female couplings, with little regard for the complexities of sexual politics, whilst others treated the lesbian angle as an indication of the character's formerly "correct" behaviour descending into base depravity as a result of contamination by the vampire curse.

"Many films of this genre introduced the lesbian angle purely to satisfy the craving for decorative female couplings, with little regard for the complexities of sexual politics."

In other words, lesbianism as a perversion, as a manifestation of impurity, the product of evil forces beyond the previously chaste victim's control.

"Daughters" is distinguished by its boldly feminist approach to the subject. Countess Bathory (Delphine Seyrig) is, whilst not exactly likeable, at least open, straightforward, in control and capable of tenderness and compassion.

The main male character, newly-married Stefan (John Karlen), is

however an unlikable character, a chauvinist with a sadistic streak. Hiding his past and much of his true nature from his bride Valerie (Danièle Courton), he rewards her love for him by exploding into a furious rage and beating her with his belt on their third day of marriage and committing adultery with Bathory's companion and servant Iona Hanczy (Andrea Rau) later that same night!

Stefan's attack is a pivotal scene in the film as up until this point his true nature has not been revealed, although plenty of hints have been dropped regarding his potential for evil.

We first meet the newly-wed Stefan and Valerie as they are on their way to visit Stefan's Mother, who at this point does not know about their marriage.

Stefan is nervous about the prospect of telling Mother the news, for years she has been telling him, "Stefan, we are different. That is God's gift to us. We must never debate it." Stefan tries every trick he knows to delay informing Mother but Valerie insists, so eventually he summons the courage to make a phone call. The viewer's suspicions regarding Stefan's true nature are confirmed when we discover that Mother is in fact a rather effeminate and sinister-looking MAN - a kind of camp Bela Lugosi type character!

When Mother learns that Stefan has married his reaction is cryptic and foreboding, "...what you did wasn't foolish Stefan, it was merely unrealistic", "Stefan, besides, whatever in the world will we do with her?...That poor little Valerie, the day she hears about us, oh I hate to think about that..."

The exchange proves too much for Stefan and as he puts the phone down, on the verge of tears, his emotions change from sorrow to rage. He begins his attack upon his defenceless wife, the suggestion being that Valerie has come between himself and Mother. Unable to face up to the fact of his own

confused sexuality and insecurity, he takes his rage out on Valerie, not specifically because their marriage has driven a wedge between himself and Mother but simply because she is a woman.

Stefan's fear of women is confirmed in the climactic struggle for domination of Valerie which takes place between himself and Bathory. He relies on his feeble attempts to assert his "masculinity" and what he believes is his unquestionable right to dominate and possess his woman, her opinions and desires being entirely irrelevant to him.

When he realises that this approach is no match for the feminine allure of the irresistible Bathory, he resorts to brute force. Bathory manipulates

they might have been, being left underdeveloped in favour of the more instant appeal of lush visuals and the film's carefully maintained erotic charge.

Indeed, *Daughters of Darkness* is distinguished by being perhaps the most beautifully photographed film of the female vampire genre and undoubtedly one of the most irresistibly erotic horror films ever made. This is a stunningly sensual film dominated by cool blues and vibrant reds, suffused light lending the visuals an added aura of mystique.

With many shots displaying the sort of fetishistic attention to detail reminiscent of Borowczyk at his very best, every scene is permeated by a delicious atmosphere of unrestrained eroticism.

Much of the credit for this atmos-

phere must be taken by the photographer Eddy van der Enden, and Francois de Roubaix who composed the excellent score, but it is the performances of the incredibly attractive leading ladies, particularly Delphine Seyrig and Lina Romay look-alike Andrea Rau, which really leave their mark.

For the definitive telling of the Bathory



Valerie through the power of gentle persuasion, compassion and pure sexual energy, promising, if not freedom, at least the prospect of eternal sensual fulfilment.

Valerie is entirely under Bathory's spell, the subtle power of female guile appealing to her feminine nature. So Stefan loses the battle of wills but most notably, Bathory gets the better of him even when he resorts to brute force, she battling his uncontrolled anger with cool intelligence as she breaks a glass bowl over his head - the sharp edges finishing him off as they slash his wrists. Valerie's submission to Bathory is completed as she joins the Countess in drinking her dying husband's blood.

Unfortunately, these attempts to introduce an element of subtext into the proceedings are not as fully realised as

legend I would have no hesitation in pointing the interested reader in the direction of Jorge Grau's chillingly clinical and genuinely horrifying *Ceremonias Sangrientas*, but for the casual viewer in search of an instantly gratifying fix of visual splendour and a real taste of the erotic appeal of the vampire ethos, *Daughters of Darkness* is hard to beat. Harvey Fenton

"This is a stunningly sensual film dominated by cool blues and vibrant reds, suffused light lending the visuals an added aura of mystique."
"...every scene is permeated by a delicious atmosphere of unrestrained eroticism."

LE FRISSON DES VAMPIRES

Saturated colours, midnight rituals and nubile vampire girls baring their fangs and everything else, can mean only one thing - yes, Jean Rollin is back again!

Shades of Don Sharp's *Kiss of the Vampire* (1962) as a honeymoon couple, (Sandra Julien and Jean-Marc Durand), visit a relative's medieval castle only to be informed that the hosts are now dead.

This revelation is followed by the appearance of a pair of voluptuous female vampires who seemingly adorn the castle like baroque ornaments, and a couple of portificating, kaftan-wearing lumpy vampires - Michael Delahaye and Jacques Robiolles (who later went on to become a film-maker too).

After much profound comment and lengthy nocturnal graveyard ceremonies, Durand fails in his attempts at saving his wife from the mark of vampirism as she expires during a "sun-kissed" finale.

Though last issues *Levres De Sang* is probably Rollin's most critically acclaimed picture, *Frison* is his best known thanks to its unusually wide (for Rollin!) European and US distribution, and is in many respects, his most accessible vampire film.

His usual preoccupations with saturated colour schemes, lengthy dolly shots, eerie architecture and lush, sandy beaches are all present, but are also helped along with some stunning imagery and a breath-taking guitar score as notes scream and wail before giving way to chugging chords and an infamously catchy riff!

Genre critic David Pine has termed Rollin, "the Claude Lebouch" of the vampire cinema - a director overloading on image over content and *Frison* is no exception.

A suitably imposing graveyard

dominates the picture, headstones jutting through the mist-enshrouded atmosphere with smoke billowing across the illuminated night sky. If you've ever seen Alice Cooper's "Welcome to my Nightmare" concert video you'll know where the "gore-rocker" got his ideas from!



Low-angled shots show the castle towering skywards whilst female vampires cradle giant candlebras - the light shimmering through the gloom as word bird-like whoops punctuate the night air. Towards the end of the film the graveyard plays host to a succession of other painterly images as a pigeon bleeds to death on a gravestone before the final blood ceremony takes place in the

churchyard as red and blue lights provide an eerie glow.

Rollin's roving camera also caresses the interior settings of the castle, its bizarre embellishments including a skull-head ornament on the mantelpiece, skull candleholders adorning the walls and to complete the skeletal influence - a "decorative" skull lies submerged in a fishbowl!

Elsewhere, contorting branches twist around the master bedroom, books throw themselves off library shelves whilst vampire girls indulge in lesbian foreplay, nuzzling each other atop a furnished bed.

Besides these diversely disorienting images, where else but in a Rollin film would a grandfather clock's midnight chimes herald the dramatic entrance from within it, of a gorgeous vampire (Dominique), or her equally startling appearance later on - signalled by a crack of thunder as she oozes forth from behind some gigantic drapes - complete with black cloak and silver spikes protruding from her nipples!

As if to reinforce the theatricality of the proceedings, she then prances on a victim, draining their blood in a choreographed attack resembling a perverse blood ballet.

The final scenes show Julien vampirised on a bleak beach locale, despite the attempts by Durand to save her. Instead, he has to watch helplessly as Julien becomes the "filling" in a deadly vampire sandwich - one bite is enough, but the frenzied attack, accompanied by a soaring guitar, sees all three perish in a dual death/orgasm - their twitching

bodies disintegrating in the rapidly rising sun.

Rollin's eye for a picturesque scene is sometimes hampered by his ear for a purportedly "profound" comment or two from his "enlightened" bloodsuckers who continually debate the existential predicament of the vampire. Thus, "The dead are present with us, and that is not faraticism. Those who don't know us accuse us of sacrilege and blasphemy. Our time is devoted to pursuing the memory of eternal darkness."

Although they "despise their situation", these angst-ridden vampires explain, "It is a great honour. A very important privilege. You couldn't escape your destiny. Cultured people often come to us. You can't elude your destiny." So we don't just have vampires here but bourgeois vampires - even worse!

With much of Rollin's work, it is better to feast your eyes upon the sumptuous visuals rather than skip to ponder the finer intricacies of vampire life



Instead, it is sufficient to heed the warning from one female character that, "This malediction which is ours must not be passed onto others", concluding her poignant statement on vampirism by explaining the creature's "ever-

lasting eternity, and pursued for ever, their fatal destiny." For Rollin's vampires here, the real horror is that their lives will never end, instead condemned to scratching out a miserable existence as they continue their living "death"

MEDIA PUBLICATIONS

Just some of the items we now stock:

Delirium Part One (£2.75), Book Of The Dead Four (£1.75), Sleazorama (99p), Cold Sweat #9 (£1.50), Draculina (£2.75) Asian Trash Cinema #3 (£5.75), Giallo Pages #1 (£2.50), In The Flesh #11 (£1.95), Trash City #13 (£1.25), Doing Rude Things (£9.95), Betty Pages #10 (£3.50), Draculina (£2.75), Fascination, (£1.45), Monster International (£2.99) plus European Trash Cinema, Absurd, Femme Fatales, Video Watchdog, Film Extremes, Creeping Unknown.....



SPECIAL FREE POSTAGE OFFER!

Many more items in stock. Write for a complete catalogue.

**MEDIA PUBLICATIONS, 173 Victoria Road, East Barnet,
London EN4 9PA, ENGLAND.**

I know what you're thinking. Why a tv movie in a film magazine? Well, the glib answer would be that *Salem's Lot* was released theatrically in Europe so it does constitute a film, but what the heck - it's actually one of those increasingly rare specimens - a good tv film.

For once, the "deadening propriety" of the small screen works to this film's advantage as the accelerating pace and atmospheric flourishes converge to form a captivating conclusion.

There is very little visible violence in the film, just an all-pervasive threat of violence continually bubbling beneath the story and which creates a cogent degree of tension.

Stephen King's best-selling (of course!) book detailing a sleepy Maine township invaded by vampires doesn't exactly scream the words "Tobe Hooper direct", but he certainly proved to be a shrewd choice.

Hooper, if anyone can, perfectly demonstrates the fickle nature of the film industry and its audience, first hailed as the new messiah for his primal classic *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974), then universally condemned for the long-awaited sequel he finally delivered, before being consigned to relative oblivion with a string of big-budget box-office flops including *Invaders from Mars* (1986), *Lifeforce* (1985) and *Spirographical Combination* (1990).

The garish title of *Chainsaw*, its contemporary setting together with its equally modern killer, is a quantum leap from the traditional vampiric creatures which King's novel evokes. However, Hooper's ability to suggest extreme violence without actually showing it in explicit detail in *Chainsaw* serves him well in *Salem's Lot* and its attendant tv restrictions.

The basic plot, of a centuries old vampire, Barlow (Reggie Nalder) and his egotistic henchman, Straker (James Mason) moving to a quiet New England town with the express aim of transforming it into a vampire colony, is relatively straightforward.

Enter the struggling author, Ben Mears (David Soul), who, upon returning to his hometown, begins to research

Salem's Lot

If you can imagine
Peyton Place, only with
Vampires....
"Death is when the
monsters get you."

Mark Petrie in Salem's Lot

a new book based on the same house on the hill - the Marion House, now "home" to Straker and Barlow.

Although from the outset, we know what is going to transpire, it is to Hooper's considerable credit that what follows is an altogether gripping piece, both physically and mentally.

For starters, this is one of those rare occasions in film where size does matter - the longer tv version running almost twice as long at 3 hours than the truncated theatrical version, and skillfully managing to build upon the characterisation of all the town's diverse inhabitants.

The shorter film version is unbalanced - featuring too much exposition and too little action in the first half, with the exact opposite being true of the remaining half.

These minor quibbles aside, Hooper manages to imbue the film with considerable stylistic élan - far removed from the obligatory flat-looking, zoom-happy cameras which frequently betray their tv film origins.

Here, the camera is fluid, ever moving as high angle shots, low angle and artfully composed dolly shots abound.

One early example sees Ben staring at the ubiquitous Marion House on the night of his arrival, its sinister aspect is

unsettling enough, but as he turns to walk away, Straker springs up into view, glares, growls "Good Evening" before walking off into the distance, the street lamps providing a spectral light.

Straker's startling initial appearance is later added to by an exquisite shot of him posing in his antiques shop, sitting next to a macabre skull artifact.

Hooper also accentuates the tension by conventional means - namely, the brutishness of Barlow, although the omniscient villain of the piece, he isn't actually glimpsed until almost half-way through the film, though his reputation certainly precedes him. As Straker quips to the inquisitive Mears: "You'll enjoy Mr Barlow and he'll enjoy you," he, ho indeed!

Elsewhere, Hooper's visual delects are in full flow on numerous occasions. An illicit affair is broken up by a shotgun toting husband, the amorous lover's escape into the night air proving to be short-lived as a bony black hand reaches out menacingly towards him.



The Gluck brothers' midnight short-cut, back through the misty woods is then carted as one boy falls down in the suddenly gusting wind, whilst his brother stares in close-up into the camera only for the cloaked figure of Straker to rear up right in front of him without warning - a real jaw-dropping shock to the audience.

Hooper then expertly stages several other frightening surprises to jolt the viewer further. Ben is attacked by a jealous boyfriend who bursts out of a bedroom wardrobe to land a knock-out punch, before he himself becomes a victim - only this time of the vampiric Barlow whose bony hand carouses open a prison cell door, his cloaked presence the epitome of evil as his eyes glare and his mouth utters an animal-like snarl as he swoops to claim his victim.

The most celebrated scare set-piece however, is when Danny Olick's younger brother, now vampirised, floats eerily outside the window, surrounded by an ethereal mist, his taloned fingers scratching the glass, beckoning his brother to let him in. Danny responds accordingly whereupon the obligatory vampire fangs come into view as the boy rears above Danny before bearing down to bite his neck.

I know it's pretty silly when you've endured such harrowing titles as *Cannibal Holocaust* and *Last House on the Left*, but this particular scene always chills my spine like no other.

"Danny's younger brother, now vampirised, floats eerily outside the window surrounded by an ethereal mist, his taloned fingers scratching at the glass and beckoning his brother to let him in."

Having survived this scare though, proves to be only the beginning, as during Danny's funeral (his death being accredited to "pernicious anemia"), clouds swirl across portentously to envelop a hitherto clear sky as the wind begins to howl and the town gravedigger, Mike (Geoffrey Lewis) finds himself transfixed by the boy's gleaming metallic coffin awaiting its burial.

The tension is really milked here as low angle shots from the coffin stare unblinkingly back up to Mike, before high-angle shots gaze unflinchingly

down to the "inviting" coffin below. Once he finally jumps down and opens the coffin, Mike finds the motionless corpse, a cut-away shot to his face dispelling the danger only for a side-profile shot to then reveal the boy sat bolt-upright and ready to pounce on the mesmerised gravedigger.

Mike himself then returns to haunt the living, the metronome sound of a creaking rocking chair indicating his presence to school-teacher Jason Burke (Lew Ayres). After an uneasy silence under Jason's watchful stare, Mike's vampire eyes then glare open and a flickering tongue ordering him to "Look at me teacher. Look at me."

A well-positioned crucifix, ie. in front of his face, dispenses this vampire but not the master himself as Barlow makes a dramatic entrance - crashing through a window into Mark Petrie's (Lance Kerwin) house, a twitching mound heaped on the floor for a single moment before moving rapidly to smash the skulls together of Mark's helpless parents. Mark's own escape is facilitated by a cross-bearing priest who is challenged by Straker thus; "Your faith against his faith (Barlow's). Is your faith enough?". Ultimately, it proves not as the priest and crucifix are crushed by the vampire.

As the local sheriff flees the carnage; "This town's falling apart and you're running" Ben shouts accusingly, the now rapidly-increasing vampire numbers make the Marston House their lair, where they are tracked to by Ben, his girlfriend Susan (Bonnie Bedelia) and Mark. Having seen a fellow survivor,

(Ed Flanders) lifted up and impaled on a wall of deer antlers by Straker, the tefarious servant is then finally shot - a volley of bullets eventually killing him.

Destroying Barlow proves even harder as Ben and Mark stake him repeatedly through the heart before his gauged features dissolve into dust - all the while, the remaining vampires creeping agonisingly closer to the duo before they realise the danger and bowed up the adjacent door which separates them from the vampires.

Having then torched the whole house, we are then left to listen to the agonised screams of the creatures trapped inside, whilst a final shot of a full moon with Barlow's features superimposed on it provides a disquieting, almost subliminal final image.

Whilst Hooper's film doesn't capture all the diverse themes and nuances of the lengthy source novel, it certainly generates enough atmosphere and vintage set-pieces to remain a compelling variation on the book.

Even with a lengthy running time, screen limitations force Hooper to condense the action on film to a small section of the town where/is in the book an entire town is destroyed by Barlow's all-embracing evil.

One of the book's most disturbing passages is also jettisoned to satisfy stringent TV guidelines, so there are no scenes of the young mother, who, in a state of shock, continues to spoon-feed her now dead baby. Also Barlow, a cultured, almost urbane villain in the novel, is rendered on film as a hideous, speechless demon, his rat-toothed fangs,



bold head and hypnotic eyes evoking the memory of F.W. Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922).

The film does also add to King's vampire myths in a variety of different ways. There's an unnerving real-life similarity between David Soul and Lance Kerwin which provides a kind of brotherly bonding, highlighted by Mark's fascination with horror films which enables him to thwart an earlier vampire attack, this specialist knowledge being paralleled by Ben's almost mystical obsession with the Marston House which indeed becomes a "fleshed-out" character in the film.

It's rotting, rancid interiors mirror the festering soul of the vampire, it's dusty atmosphere conjuring up a Gothic milieu, whilst the imposing staircase proves to be as much a centrepiece as Hitchcock's similar stairwell in *Psycho* (1960), and the stained glass windows suggest religious connotations which are at odds with the vile occupants of the house.

Mason's superb performance as Straker is also an intriguing variant on the Renfield character from "Dracula". No fly-eating or slavish devotion for him - he is almost as powerful as his master, Barlow, is certainly more urbane and positively *exerts* malevolence - most noticeable as he visibly "preens" himself whilst unwrapping the body of the young Glick boy, a "tasty morsel" he is pleased to present before his master.

"It's rotting, rancid interiors mirror the festering soul of the vampire."
(*The Marston House*)

Harry Sukman's straining strings score the film to perfection, though somewhat derivative of Bernard Herrmann's stabbing score for the aforementioned *Psycho*.

If anything, the film's only major flaw is Hooper's own talent for presenting natural, everyday scenes of horror to us in a convincing manner. As such,



the scenes of the jilted husband having caught his "rival" flagrant defile with his wife, and forcing the terrified man to put the barrel of a loaded shotgun into his mouth and pull the trigger, and of an equally jilted boyfriend who leaps from out of a wardrobe to punch Ben, are both rendered almost as terrifying as the supernatural presence of the film's vampires.

Despite these minor flaws however, it's still a majestic work from Hooper, his sweeping camera movements and audacious shock tactics more than compensating, as do the (for once), well-drawn characters who inhabit the small town locale.

During the course of the film Ben asks: "Do you believe a thing can be inherently evil. Can it be evil in its stone foundations, its wooden beams, in the glass of its windows, the plaster of its ceilings. I think that an evil house attracts evil men."

Well, having watched the film you'll find this a persuasive argument, perfectly encapsulating the emanating evil which seemingly emanates from inside the house, and also flagrantly manifests itself in the vampire hosts it houses.

An entirely unconnected, lame-brained sequel, *A Return To Salem's Lot* (1987) surfaced later from the sporadically interesting director Larry Cohen, but forget this imposter and reserve a place in your own horror pantheon for the original film - a chilling, fear-filled epic which will certainly have you investigating any weird scratching noises on your bedroom windows at night.

'Do you believe a thing can be inherently evil. Can it be evil in its stone foundations, its wooden beams, in the glass of its windows, the plaster of its ceilings. I think that an evil house attracts evil men.'

BRAM STOKER'S *Dracula*



A lavishly mounted, technicolour extravaganza from one of Hollywood's most visionary directors - but does the film really live up to the hype? Why not find out....

Whilst Francis Ford Coppola's big-budget *Dracula* does laudably follow closely the varying plot contrivances of its literary inspiration, its characterisation of Dracula himself stresses romanticism rather than reality and mainstream expediency as opposed to the maverick creativity of its director.

Stoker's vampire, though undoubtedly alluring to women, and possessing a powerful erotic charge, is still basically a tormented soul, condemned to eternal life (not love), far removed from the overly romantic figure portrayed in this film.

However, once you can force yourself to accept this extensive artistic licence, and the disastrous casting of an ineffectual Kenau Reeves as Jonathan Harker, and the vapid Winona Ryder as Mina/Elisabeta, then you may actually find yourself enjoying the film for a variety of different reasons.

You may think it sheer madness to praise a film given these circumstances but cinema, as the word implies, is a purely visual art, and it's the considerable visual elan here which elevates the film to classic rather than catastrophic status - image over content yes, but then far too many contemporary films possess neither.

The sullen hues which envelop the opening scenes of Vlad Tepes, essayed in a bitter conflict with the Turks, countless bodies speared high on stakes, eerily silhouetted against the reddening sky and so earning him the sobriquet of

Vlad The Impaler, are an indication of the sumptuous "pleasures" which continually unfold.

It's this disquieting imagery - of decimated corpses hung limply on wooden stakes soaring skywards, which evokes a kind of perverse religious iconography, and indeed, it is the subsequent inversion of this spiritual theme which



provides Vlad Dracul with his sanguinary motivation as he finds his love, Elisabeta, strewn across a church altar - dead.

As Vlad declares: "I Dracula, Vorode of Transylvania, will avenge my own death to avenge hers with all the powers of darkness", in a parallel with Christ's own resurrection from

the cross, before proclaiming, "I renounce God - and all you hypocrites who feed off him. If my beloved burns in hell - so shall I!"

"I renounce God - and all you hypocrites who feed off him. If my beloved burns in hell - then so shall I!"

Vlad's impassioned response here as he thrusts a lance into a giant stone crucifix is to literally strike into the heart of God, as blood effuses from stone angels to form a torrent gushing down the altar steps - a microscopic view of the "living cells" in Elisabeta's blood symbolising that the "blood is the life".

If anything, the emotional impact and physical dynamics contained in these scenes prove to be the apex of Coppola's achievements in the film - none of the remaining sequences can equal, let alone better this opening section.

For the remainder of the film, we have to rely on old style effects and camera tricks (Orson Welles, circa 1930s) to enliven the proceedings and supplement the unfolding drama.

With this in mind, there are (thankfully), no scene-stopping, and therefore, stealing, pyrotechnics to obscure the varying human emotions at the core of the film. Instead, more subtle embellishments occur as ominous clouds



dissolve into shots of Dracula's hypnotic eyes while ethereal blue flames cloak Castle Dracula with the expressionist veneer of F.W. Murnau's *Foxes*.

Harker's approach, ascending the stone steps to the imposing castle, is bathed in translucent light, lending a gleaming, fairytale aura to the proceedings straight out of Hening's visionary *Nosferatu* (1979).

Other, equally stylised aesthetic influences shine through the film, from the arm-shaped torch holders which adorn the castle walls (it's own unique architecture inspired by the paintings of Kupka), to the earth and elemental symbols - birds, dragons, snakes and fire which permeate the opulent costumes and sets, also invoking the presence of Dracula's distinctive crest.

As if a combination of all these elements, Gary Oldman's excellent portrayal of the Prince of Darkness is notable not only for his dynamic range but also his chameleon-like appearances throughout the film which reveal the depths of his personality and betray the longevity of his miserable existence.

His numerous incarnations as Dracula include an androgynous appearance with flowing red cloak and bleached white hair, his train billowing behind like a vivid sea of blood, a debauched city dandy complete with hat and tails, to a monstrous werewolf creature with erubescant eyes.

He runs a whole gamut of differing

personalities, being capable of ambiguous sexuality - deliciously licking the blood from Harker's shaving razor and also romancing Mina, or pouncing savagely on a victim like a drooling wild beast in order to suck their very life from them.

It is this kind of diversity, together with the captivating picture of evil as presented by Lucy (in Sadie Frost's bravura performance), which completely overshadows those who represent the side of religious purity - it poses the question, maybe the devil really does have all the best "tunes" after all.

Whilst Anthony Hopkins mugging of Van Helsing's valiant character exhibits the same weaknesses as Sir Laurence Olivier's performance over a decade earlier in John Badham's version, Lucy is seen as a vibrant person in life, enjoying the implied eroticism of the "Arabian Nights" and as an alluring vampire temptress in "death" - her chalky complexion and ruby lips described thus; "I could see a white face and red, gleaming eyes" as she beckons her husband to "come to me" before a hastily thrust crucifix breaks the spell.

It is as if even in death, Lucy is desirable, "Never did I see such baffled malice on a face... The beautiful colour became livid, the eyes seemed to throw out sparks of hell-fire."

From the bullish Van Helsing, it is verbal sparks which fly, diagnosing his prey thus, "We are dealing with forces

beyond all human experience... an enormous power", and whilst admitting that Lucy "lives beyond the grace of God", Van Helsing understands the true horror explaining that "we fight not one beast but legions, that go on age after age, feeding on the blood of the living."

The snow-capped conclusion amidst the hostile environment of Dracula's Carpathian lair sees even Van Helsing momentarily attracted by the lure of evil as he contemplates a decidedly carnal carress with the possessed Mina, before regaining his senses to ward off both her advances, and those of Dracula's vampire brides who materialise before him, only to be vanquished by the circle of flame Van Helsing creates.

**"We fight not one beast
but legions, that go on
age after age, feeding on
the blood of the living."
(Van Helsing in 'Dracula')**

Dracula's ensuing death, stabbed with a Bowie knife, does restore some authenticity to Hollywood's usually "unfaithful" adaptations of the book with the dying vampire long's emotive last breath uttering the plaintive, "Give me peace."

So, as an accurate retelling of the original novel, well yes, it just about





cuts it, but as an accurate portrayal of Dracula himself - well forget it. He is shown to become more a Valerius than a predatory vampire - not exactly one of Stoker's more salient themes, but such concerns are somewhat swamped in any case by Coppola's elaborate visual style, as the director himself admitted to fostering "a kind of evocative, poetic use of imagery, in order to render "almost a dream state" here.

Coppola's fascination for symbolism, very much an aesthetic, artistic reaction to the rapidly growing influence of science and industry in an increasingly secular world, coupled with his drug-addicted-laced rebellion against bourgeois society, provides an added sub-text to the picture to complement the compelling visuals.

In his opulent sets, decorative costumes and imaginative staging, Coppola has at the very least, presented us with an unusually attractive addition to the crowded vampire genre, and may even have provided the catalyst for a Dracula renaissance as regards the celluloid canon.

His influence in terms of inspiring creativity, quality and undoubted mass appeal, so renewing interest in the genre once again, is appropriate given the vampire's ability to revitalise and regenerate its own eternal existence.

If Coppola's film does provide this impetus then it couldn't but be a deliciously ironic legacy for Coppola's film to symbolise



CAN YOU SAY NO TO TRACI?



Check out movie *Traci Lords* and find out "Larry Rivers" is the central issue of **NECRONOMICON**.

See *"The Living Dead At The Manchester Morgue"* in all their true horror whilst the wild world of *Euro Horror* is connected with *Jameson* on *Man to Man*, *Jack Palance* and *John Huston* are bringing *"Faces of Death"* *For Mankind*, *David Lynch* and *The Alien* from *U.F.C. 2.0*.

Order direct from

11 Ashby Road

NEWTON ABBOT

Gloucestershire GL8 7JL

England

41-207000 p 4, 5

Europe: 41-207000

Switzerland: 41-207000

Outside Europe: 41-207000

Charges payable to **NECRONOMICON**





Your going back to your own roots with *Dust Devil* - a very personal film?

It's kind of my obligation more to that part of the world. I figured that before moving on and trying to write movies about America or any other place I don't know that well, I needed to try and say something about where I came from. I couldn't walk away from 15 years of back history without getting in a word edgeways really.

Has it been a cathartic film. Have you exorcised some of your own personal demons on the screen?

I'm not sure whether we succeeded in exorcising them or whether we just managed to invoke something (laughing). As it turned out things got pretty hellish.

The *Dust Devil* figure is based on a real-life figure from your own experience?

He's kind of a composite of a whole bunch of things. At its most primal level I was trying to find this figure of "The Man With No Name", the walking man, this character who seems to show up in all the spaghetti westerns and in so many different novels and rock songs. I think he's been around a hell of a long time but they haven't quite got as far as showing the Aron monster model kit from it and at the same time I think he's clearly identifiable. I've just kind of linked him with the real-life serial killer from Bethany who was never really caught, so therefore one can set one's own imagination loose on the whole thing.

You've mentioned Spaghetti Western influence, but the film also displays a kind of Hitchcockian tension. There's also a great bird's-eye view shot of the lead players on the edge of a precipice,

After the critical success of the pop-promo styled "Hardware", *Necronomicon* spoke to director Richard Stanley about his latest feature, filmed in the arid Namibian desert and discovered how this tale of a soul-stealing serial killer defied production problems to rise phoenix like from the ashes and materialise on our screens.

With influences ranging from Sergio Leone's Spaghetti westerns to the thrillers of Alfred Hitchcock, "Dust Devil" has been described as "combining Pale Rider's mysticism with Hannibal Lecter social skills."

Intrigued? Then follow our journey into the ancient myths and magic of deepest Africa and learn about Stanley's ambitious future project.

embracing - It reminds me of Hitchcock's camera spinning round screen lovers in his films. Is he a big influence and who else inspires you?

I'd say a fair amount. A lot of people here missed the fact for a long time that the hitchhiker character in *Dust Devil* was nicknamed "Hitch". This is just as much a Hitchcock nod as it is a hitchhiker reference.

The way he made films - would you say that he has been more of an influence than say Argento who is frequently mentioned?

The Italians are a huge influence on me. The whole bunch obviously are a lot more important than anything that's come recently and most people have trouble seeing back much further then say *Near Dark* or *The Hitcher*.



In *Dust Devil* you have to believe in African magic to combat evil. Ancient customs and the supernatural seems very important here?

I was very intrigued at the number of myths which show up worldwide and that Namibia and South Africa are full of avenging hitchhiker stories where people you pick up then disappear out of your car and the usual, really reliable accounts from local policemen and all sorts of other people who claim to pick these guys up. The core of the *Dust Devil* figure is the "Night Walker", who you can trap with a magic stick and quite a few ideas like this carved stick which you use to catch the thing and the way that the *Dust Devil* has this problem with either its shadow or its reflection also appears in the film. The image of itself seems to be so close to the ideas of the western vampire myth that I'm often quite amazed.

A lot of modern films are malleable - do you think we need more films like *Dust Devil* with its mythical qualities?

Well, certainly I think mythology is very neglected in a way. People seem to be forgetting very rapidly and are overall very disinterested. I'm not so sure whether one could make more movies in that there's a resounding lack of interest in it all. Very few people seem to have the slightest interest in myths these days.

There's a very Gothic atmosphere in Coppola's *Dracula* though on a more optimistic note?

I think *Dracula* helped *Dust Devil* a little in that it at least got it off the shelf. A year ago no one understood anything about what was going on in *Dust Devil*. At least after *Dracula*

came out all of a sudden people seemed to understand what was going on a bit better and didn't keep asking questions about how he comes to appear and disappear the whole time in the film and what the hell's going on, so they were very confused about 12 months ago. So Dracula helped Dust Devil's cause a little.

In Dust Devil you explore its earthly things such as racism, racism, its ugly head and man/wife human relationships. Is this equally important in the film in addition to the mythical elements?

Well, I figured I wanted to tie it in to ideas of real horror and if there's going to be a devil I had to tie him into ideas of where evil lay. On one level I was trying to use those two plot threads to pinpoint what I figured were the two most problems in South Africa at the moment.

It's been quite a battle for you to get the film released?

Yes. Palace ceased to exist before the film got finished and then it kind of got dropped and shooting was never quite completed. Towards the end, script pages were torn out in handbats and then everything just wound down and there were about eight people left in the crew by the end of the shoot. Everything just disappeared into limbo for about 2 years and has been finished as best we could, basically out of my own pocket. There have been quite a few problems where for instance, we couldn't use certain footage and also couldn't afford to bring the cast back again to re-shoot. So on the whole, it's been a bit of a patchwork affair, trying to weave the reels of it back again.

The concept of time is noticeable in several scenes - the Dust Devil takes polaroids of his victims, as if almost to capture a portion of their life, and in a later cinema scene the film itself flickers and falls off screen - an interesting sub-text?

There's kind of two things going on. Partially it's capturing the soul. In a lot of African countries taking a photograph is construed as catching someone's soul. Also, there's this more complex idea of the black magician character trying to escape from linear reality and escape back into the spirit world to try and break through the barrier between worlds.

In a lot of African countries taking a photograph is construed as catching someone's soul.

Time is very much a concept applying only to our reality. It's probably the first thing to snap and be discarded. I think as the characters start to understand the parameters of this

world they're in (in the film), it almost starts to hinder their discovering that they're actually in a movie. Hitch's photographs also serve as continually polaroids like that.

The Dust Devil seems to be an amalgamation of many different characters - is it this which gives him his power?

I figure that the actual classic black magician character in a way is probably quite heavily related to all these archetypes and I think that elements of werewolves and vampires tend to naturally fit together quite well. And apart from the fact that vampires have a habit of turning into wolves and things, I know that a lot of black magicians are either meant to be able to suck peoples vital essences or turn into werewolves themselves.

Have you ultimately achieved what you set out to with the release of Dust Devil?

It's probably too early for me to be able to



figure that out. I'll have to sleep on it a while and take a look at the movie in a couple of years and cross that question.

Because of the various problems you had in making the film towards the end of the shoot, it's possibly not the version you envisaged making at the start?

I'd say that's true on the one hand but at the same time the chaotic and at times, pretty catastrophic progress of the movie in some ways has made it fairly unique. I'm not really sure it could have been made under any other circumstances. I think that a sense of the accidental probably translates onto the screen quite well. Like the film snapping or the car accident in the last reel, I think a lot of that feeling of everything being terribly chaotic and almost accidental kind of comes across quite well.

Tell me about your next project - \$ 16

version of The Island of Dr. Moreau, "in the tradition of Cannibal Holocaust?"

I think I was taking the piss that day! It's quite

What we're aiming at is trying to pull off something like a Planet of the Apes of the 90's. What I'm hoping we don't do is wind up creating another Nightbreed.

naïly. It contains like Dust Devil, a whole bunch of different genres welded together by the time it's over I've been working with Michael Hen, the writer of "Dispatches", the Vietnam war novel and Apocalypse Now and Full Metal Jacket, and who came on as the American dialogue writer. We've basically come up with a revision and an up-date of the Wells novel.

How will H G Wells alleged support for concentration camps influence the picture?

I don't buy it personally. I'm quite a big defender of Wells and I think that just because he writes about these things we can't really condemn him as necessarily speaking with the "voice" of Moreau, in that I feel in most of Wells' work, utopia is like The Time Machine or under Dr. Moreau, things are pretty dodgy from the outset and I think they'd be hard-pressed to think that Wells is actually approving of life on the island.

Your version sounds closer to the earlier Island of Lost Souls (1933) than the inept remake, The Island of Dr. Moreau (1977)?

Yes. I hated the remake. I found very little worthwhile in it. In the script at the moment we've tried to portray Moreau as a kind of cross between an Old Testament prophet and Josef Mengele (!) One of the characters originally referred to the Island in the script as "Auschwitz on sea", but we had to remove that after complaints from the Americans. I tried to retain the war crime aspect of it all, and by up-dating it I've also tried to bring it out a bit more by making the castaway character into a civil rights lawyer working for the United Nations, rather than making him just the gentleman of leisure in the novel.

There's going to be a large number of creatures here, something absent from your previous films - are you looking forward to the challenge?

Inevitably, it's a colossal challenge but this is a "make or break" project for me in that it all goes wrong I imagine I won't be working again. At the same time, if it all goes right, we just might end up with some kind of cross-over movie. It's keep a horror audience happy but at the same time be relevant enough for the mainstream.

ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE WEST

A monumental picture of unrequited love, greed and avarice, dreams and revenge - all set in the sometimes beautiful, sometimes hostile sage brush of the American West. Cowboys and Indians it ain't.

Once upon a time, in the yawning paranoic wastes of the American mid-west, lived a prevailing Hollywood myth - that all cowboys and lawmen were good, honest men. If not, they would be clad all in black and however despicable a character, however cunning a gunman, they would undoubtedly perish at the hands of one of these oh so righteous men. This American Dream was about to be shattered, and by of all people, an Italian!

The late Sergio Leone had grown up with the now stilted, formula pictures of John Wayne and others that preached heroism and dwarfed the screen with and landscapes, calling themselves *High Noon* (1952) and *Shane* (1953) to name but two. Alternatively, others such as Howard Hawks would reuse the same ingredients, only adding elements of comedy as in *Rio Bravo* (1959). Leone embraced a new realisation sweeping across America in the 1960's as native American Indians, previously indicated as "redskins" and "savages" became known and recognised (if not accepted) as fellow Americans. Leone used these cultural changes to push back the hitherto insular boundaries of the Western film and so coin the phrase, "Spaghetti Westerns", now



synonymous with his name. Leone's westerns, as the name implied, were more cosmopolitan, combining different elements that would gel like the colourful ingredients in his native cuisine. So, radiant sunshine would be as smouldering cheese and garish bloodshed became its tomato accompaniment - all set out atop a gaping landscape which formed a doughy base.

Instead of heroism and moral fortitude, Leone emphasised greed and

cruelty, coupled with extreme but very stylised violence. Silent honour and revenge abound in pictures populated with sleazy figures and desperadoes, all egocentric characters appearing like refugees from some pasta-land horror film.

Leone further pooled back the frontiers of the western genre by juxtaposing familiar myths with catholic symbolism and accentuating the vastness of the landscape by creating operatic, almost ritual style film requiems - their length echoing the very background they were filmed in. Here, Leone re-wrote the rule book as Almeria in Spain generally substituted for the US/Mexican border. His first western, *A Fistful of Dollars* (1964) was in fact a co-production between Germany, Spain and Italy, so it was in every sense, a European western. The remainder of this film trilogy, *For A Few Dollars More* (1966) and *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly* (1967), both improved on their predecessors and sealed Leone's fertile collaboration with composer Ennio Morricone, whose epic, yet quirky scores give each picture even more individuality.

Leone's European approach to the western wasn't for taciturn anti-heroes such as Clint Eastwood, in his case motivated by greed in *The Good, The*

Bad and The Ugly or by revenge, the sole motive for Charles Bronson in *Once Upon A Time In The West* (1968). Leone's use of strong, silent characters, contrasted with loud bursts of gunfire or birds squawking has stamped an indelible mark on modern-day film-makers. Eastwood's calm, unruffled figure acted as the forerunner to the present day actioneers such as Sly Stallone's *Rambo* series and Arno Schwarzenegger's iron man persona. This silent, omnipotent character has also pervaded the horror genre with an army of unspoken killers from "The Shape" in *Halloween* (1978) through to Jason in the plethora of *Friday the 13th* films.

Given this pedigree it should come as no surprise that Leone's finest work, *Once Upon A Time In The West* was co-written by none other than Dario Argento. He too has since gone on to invest many of his own films with Leone's filmic signatures and combining equally stylised violence with a melody collection of bizarre characters whose psychological instabilities are often the catalyst for bouts of frenzied killing.

For *Once Upon A Time In The West* Leone manages to combine all the elements of his unique film style, decorate them with a memorable Morricone score and also play out a harsh, Argento inspired scenario that employs both noble revenge and dream driven passions.

The film boasts a trademark Leone opening with hald dialogue but spades of natural sound as a three-man death squad await an oncoming train at a deserted railway station in the bleak mid-west. A constantly creaking wind vane punctuates the silence with the precision on a metronome, elsewhere a telegram machine rattles out its message staccato style, water drips tortuously onto a hat and a fly whirs incessantly in the background.

This cacophony is pierced by the whistle of the now fast approaching steam train. The locomotive's arrival only disappoints the deadly triumvirate however, as it fails to disgorge the visitor they are expecting. Only as the train chugs off, accompanied by the haunting strains of a harmonica, does the frame reveal the lone figure of Charles Bronson.

"an opera where the arias aren't sung, they're stared."

The film has been described as an "opera: where the arias aren't sung, they're stared", and that is certainly the case here as eye contact is made between "Harmonica" (Bronson) and his would-be assassins. Having learnt that Frank, his expected opponent is coming, Harmonica quickly proves that he can also make his gun "sing" by summarily despatching the trio.

As if this gradual accumulation of tension is not enough Leone then surpasses himself in the film's piece de resistance. The setting switches to "Sweetwater Farm", out in the wilderness as the McBain family prepare for a celebration meal to greet the imminent arrival of McBain's new wife (Claudia Cardinale).

Impending doom is indicated however, as the birds stop singing and an eerie silence reigns. Still silence, and then, a gunshot rings out and in long shot we see a young girl fall to the ground clutching her stomach as a flock of birds scatter noisily overhead.

Next follows a running shot of the distraught father, McBain, as he races to his daughters aid, only for more gunshots to blast out, this time killing both McBain and one of his sons.

A pov. shot rushes past the inside of the farmhouse as a young boy emerges to look out at the devastation now in front of him with virtually an entire family massacred in seconds - the bodies stretched out on the spartan ground ahead forming a macabre tableau.

It is now only now that the unseen assailants emerge, five trench-coated figures appearing from all corners of the sage brush. Their menacing approach is superbly captured in the frame as the five gunmen all converge on the helpless, frightened child.

Then, a masterstroke as the camera (taking the child's viewpoint), spirals onto the the radiant blue eyes of a

hitherto unseen Henry Fonda. The shock for audiences at the time must have been awesome. For here, before their very own eyes stood the wholesome, American film hero Fonda, yet here he is the merciless orchestrator of a family's destruction.

What's still to follow as one of Fonda's henchmen asks, "What are we going to do about this one Frank?". A pregnant pause ends with the chilling reply; "Well now that you've called me by name...". The pleading look in the innocent boy's eyes fades as he stares into the barrel of Frank's gun - the gunshot merging into a jump cut of a screaming steam train, indicating that the boy is dead.

Fonda's famed, all embracing baby blue eyes have now become as barren and unforgiving as the hostile desert milieu. So great are the impact of these opening scenes that the remainder of the film, to be brutally honest, can't quite emulate the pathos and high drama evoked here, and so wonder.

Until the equally inspiring climax, the following scenes are mainly expository. Having arrived by train, Claudia is introduced to us as Mrs. McBain, grimly surveying the outwretched bodies of her new husband and his family, lying in funeral repose on primitive tables. The arrival of Jason Roberts as Cheyenne, and his subsequent rescue of Harmonica from the clutches of old blue eyes, Frank, and his accomplice, railway entrepreneur Morton, also begins to reveal the diverse motives which drive the film's protagonists.





Cardinale is not so much a grieving widow as a voluptuous schemer, trying to find her late husband's unsuspect wealth. Her motives are tapered to converge with both Cheyenne and Harmonica's as we learn how the late McBain had astutely tied his money to his life long dream - his cherished vision of building and running his own private railway station.

The ensuing battle involves the protagonists frantically trying to erect the unbuilt station before the fast-approaching railway line is ready to be laid through it. (A clause in McBain's documents requires the station to be built before the track reaches it or else forfeiting their rights to the existing land and its potentially lucrative money value). Battle lines are drawn up as Frank and Morton attempt to buy up the station in their zeal to own the entire rail complex in the west.

The grand finale inevitably culminates with the anticipated duel between Frank and Harmonica, who, throughout the film, has maintained his mystery identity from an exasperated Frank who can vaguely recall meeting him before.

Harmonica will only reveal his identity to Frank "at the point of dying". The harsh guitar strings and straining harmonica set the tone as the men traverse their battleground before finally turning to face each other. It is then, via flashback, that we learn the reason behind Harmonica's obsessive pursuit of Frank. We see a monstrous tableau of figures surrounding a very young Harmonica, who, kneeling, is



carrying the weight of his brother who is hanging perilously from an archway with a rope around his neck. It is Harmonica's support which is saving his brother's life by preventing the noose from tightening. The mastermind behind this nefarious torture - yes, none other than Frank, who callously shoves a harmonica into the youngster's mouth just before he collapses - so condemning his brother to his death as the rope

pulls to. The strangled tune that emanates from the instrument is the leitmotif that Harmonica plays throughout the film.

As we suddenly return to reality, Harmonica's granite stare is the precursor to his cathartic shooting of Frank. The final irony has him placing the harmonica into the dying Frank's mouth. He now knows Harmonica's identity, at the point of dying as promised, only it is his own.

The film as a whole remains a complete standout for a number of reasons. Morricone's evocative score is full of lush orchestral movements which lead the film its grandiose, epic feel, interspersed with his own customary music signatures and sapient phrasing.

The musical "character-building" here is impressive. Whilst Harmonica's plaintive motif is the most salient, we also have Cheyenne's wounded state and eventual death signified by an abruptly ending piece, with the sumptuous main theme conjuring up the feeling of McBain's cherished railway





dream that may yet become reality - the perfect musical epitaph for his treasured, epoch-making railway vision, aimed at transporting the primitive mid-west into the mechanised Steam Age.

In addition, it is the diverse characters, each with their own personal, often mysterious motives, and who interplay superbly throughout the film, each given their own intricate character foibles which enhances the proceedings no end.

"McBain's cherished railway dream that may yet become reality... his treasured, epoch-making vision aimed at transporting the primitive mid-west into the mechanised Steam Age."

As such, Morton, though almost an incidental figure in some respects, is not merely a power-crazed railway mogul, purely driven by his own zest to own the whole western railway, but by a persistent desire to see the line reach the Pacific Ocean so that he can gaze out of the train and onto the water.

This perpetual dream stays with him even to his death as fatally wounded, he crawls towards a gaping pool that is to him, a minute oasis amidst the sprawling desert scrub. The descending music

scales point to his downfall, the drowning of a dream, but like McBain before him, he has desires, wishes to fulfill. It is as if Leone is expressing his own view that "each man must have a dream".

As is so often the case with Leone it is the visuals first, story second, a trait that has been closely followed by the aforementioned Argento in his own films. References abound such as the climbing camera which soars above the railway station to reveal an entire town beyond it in Leone's film. Note Argento's similar camera moves in *Tenebrae* (1982) as the camera scales an apartment block before angling its way inside.

The revelatory flashback in *Once Upon A Time In The West* which explains the reason behind Harmonica's angst is another trait that has wound up

in Argento's film style, as he gives the killers in his own films particular psychological motivations in the likes of *Deep Red* (1975) and *Tenebrae*.

Morton's deep look into a painting of his beloved sea also surfaces in Lucio Fulci's *The Beyond* (1981) where painterly landscapes become reality.

Above all though, Leone's success relies upon managing to inveigle us into his particular world, full of desperate men with hidden motives which almost always encompass horrific violence.

It is this kind of bloodshed, coupled with the revenge motifs and the thought that the "good guys" might not win - they might not even be the "good guys" in reality, which gives these films such a wide-ranging appeal, especially to fans of both the horror film and martial arts genres.

Leone's eschewal of accepted western genre conventions has also opened up this brand Spaghetti cinema to others. Extreme close-ups of sweating faces, claying hands set against a perennially hostile environment, are the type of stylistic trademarks which have informed so many other similar films.

He may have been cast in the role of a comparative outsider looking in, but Leone's westerns reinvigorated the whole genre (in real danger of self-parody due to its anachronistic nature) and saved it from a rapid demise.

As such, his impact here is undeniable. Leone may have banded in his gun but his image-conscious films will continue to fascinate and inspire a whole new breed of willing desperadoes.



KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR JORG!



Horror art or horror porn? Original and visionary or sick and demented? Whatever your view, German director Jorg Buttgereit has certainly produced a thought-provoking ode to death with Nekromantik 2.

The precocious film-making talent of young German director Jorg Buttgereit is no ordinary one, and his most recent feature film, *Nekromantik 2* is no ordinary film.

His previous works such as the original *Nekromantik* and *Der Todeskin* illustrate a deeply personal approach to living and even more so, to dying. Grotesque scenes of gore and violence are often merely sporadic intrusions into a more prosaic, mundane view of "routine" life and are rendered all the more disturbing for that. These films cannot

merely be dismissed as "kitchen sink" dramas however, instead they actively challenge the viewer to sympathise with the characters, to understand their actions no matter how violent or extreme they may be and then asking each of us to question our own morality.

Buttgereit's willingness to tackle taboo subjects such as necrophilia stems not from a simplistic desire to amuse, but rather to attempt to unravel such unwholesome pursuits, as one critic observed of the films, they are "inspiring, almost subtle films, not the silly bloodbaths of popular imagination."

If anything, the ultimate goal of *Nekromantik 2* is glimpsed in the film's opening quotation from mass murderer Theodore R Bundy who proclaimed "I want to master life and death."

Society's continual fascination with life and death, birth and rebirth, is startlingly evoked in the opening black and white sequence (replayed from *Nekromantik*) where a man simultaneously stabs himself in the stomach whilst in the act of masturbating. His eventual ejaculation is of blood - a macabre metaphor alluding to the close proximity of sex with death, that is, the act of procreation producing life and automatically to follow later, death.

Death is only the beginning for Monika M here as she exhumes her dead lover from the grave to "resume"

their "relationship", the physical aspect helped at anything by the corpses continual state of *rigor mortis* (!), but not by the putrefying mess he eventually becomes.

Without blinking an eye, Monika calmly dismembers the body and throws it out with the rubbish in plastic bags, saving only the head and that most personal part which ends up wrapped in clingfilm on a plate in her fridge - frozen meat indeed!

With tongue firmly in (rotting) cheek, Buttgereit then has Monika replace her lost love with a new man - his "profession" involving doing "voice-overs" for porn films!

Once he finally realises that Monika's lift doesn't quite reach the top floor, it's all too late as she strings him up, before later punctuating their lovemaking with the ultimate "coitus interruptus" as she saws off his head (yeuch!) and replaces it with the coveted head from her dead lover to continue the sex act.

Buttgereit's self-confessed eschewal of films etiquette - "I show what I feel is necessary" - makes for a disturbing journey into the dark obsessions of the human psyche.

Whilst the "body in the bags" scene betrays one of his main influences, the work of Abel Ferrara (whose *Angel of Vengeance* includes a similar sequence),

the primary drive behind *Nekronomik 2* is Butigerer's own highly individual style.

Time and again formulaic images are presented as bizarre and confrontational rather than merely stilted compositions. The opening masturbation sequence may elicit sensual excitement in a porn film, but the grotesquely rhythmic knife-thrusts here provide a far more unnerving aspect to the whole scene.

Likewise, the sight of Monika M in a slinky dress, stockings and high heels and wearing garish red nail polish, conjures up visions of a femme fatale - a fantasy which soon evaporates with the thud of shovel on earth, soil on timber, as she unearths her lover's corpse in an act of grisly defilement.

When she's not busy pondering over her own existential deliberations, the incongruity of Monika's all-conquering "love" for her boyfriend is readily to the fore. Thus, she plants a smouldering kiss on the corpse's decaying head, jovial music accompanies her one-sided "lovmaking" bouts, whilst wilting flowers indicate the all-too putrifying presence of the corpse, now laid out in state on a table in her flat.

"She plants a smouldering kiss on the corpse's decaying head"

The grim ritual of desmembering the body becomes almost routine as Monika sets systematically about her work, complete with rubber gloves, as if all in a day's work. It is as if everything has become bland and regularised in a drab and dreary society. Everything we fantasise over, sensualise over, fetishise over, is reduced to a prosaic, everyday level, no better exemplified than in Monika's new boyfriend whose lifeless attempts at sexual relations are a legacy of his own voyeuristic, passive "voice-over" work on the porn films he watches and seemingly drain him of genuine emotions. He is as remote and



distanced from Monika as he is from the girls on the screen he gazes at during his "working" day. Intimacy and love are out - he is more a spectator than a participant in the now "mechanised" act of love.

Butigerer's penchant for abstract symbolism also rears its head as a lizard crawls free from the grave Monika is busy unearthing, only to be later attacked by an insect as it rolls over in slow-motion. Monika also watches an art film with her new boyfriend where naked men are shown eating row upon row of hard-boiled eggs - the ending of life perhaps?

Later, they go to the zoo where life, if not ended, is certainly held captive. It is as if the quality of life, for animals and humans, is in some way diluted, fragmented like Monika's fragile mental state which fluctuates from the happiness she experiences on a fairground ride to the visions of her lover's decaying features which continually permeate her thoughts.

In a similar way, lurid fantasies/nightmares pervade the film as a faintly Freudian image appears of Monika striding, a pianist pounding the keys with venom whilst a skull floats and a corpse revolves against a nebulous background. Monika's boyfriend then dreams of being buried up to his neck in grass as a

virginal white Monika kisses him before placing a cardboard box over his head and burying her stiletto heels into it.

However gratuitous, however gruesome all of this may be, nothing compares with the sight of a group of female "necrophiles" engourging themselves on a diet of chocolates and obscene TV sensationalism as they watch an explicit documentary on seal culling which features real-life atrocities as seals are summarily eviscerated on camera.

The sight of the seals happily swimming and playing in the sea beforehand, makes the whole "spectacle" even more joyful and callous.

What we are seeing, in effect, is the hidden cruelty of "civilised" society being exposed, a veneer of respectability being peeled back as surely as the lacinated skin from the seals face in the abhorrent shockumentary.

Elsewhere, Butigerer invests his own assumable style upon the film by way of the historical signposts he imbues it with. Take the early sequence where a slow pan over an imposing whitewashed house evokes the spirit of the silent classic *Nosferatu* and ditto, the slowly prowling camera which peers through the shackled cemetery gates, the undercranking, hand-held camera similarly conjuring up a feeling of timelessness and the stylish *chansouco* images of German Expressionism.

"What we are seeing in effect, is the hidden cruelty of 'civilised' society being exposed, a veneer of respectability being peeled back as surely as the lacinated skin from the seals face in the abhorrent shockumentary."



Although *Nelromantik 2* showcases a more professional gloss than the original film, it lacks that film's raw visceral punch, whilst the slower, deliberate camera style, though an intended rebellion against the kinetic pop-video style filming currently so much in vogue, it does also render some scenes as being rather too lengthy, with some plodding "meatiness" to overcome.

On the plus side however, is most certainly a welcome departure from genre (and mainstream) constraints by attempting to provide a story told solely from a woman's viewpoint. After all, it is Monika who is the film's main protagonist and although we appear to be

witnessing her gradual descent into complete madness, it is still her whom we feel the most affinity for – despite her decidedly homicidal, not to mention necrophiliac tendencies. Not content with mastering life and death, Monika also wants to conquer immortal love and whose to say that she won't succeed if a *Nekromantik 3* ever appears on the future horizon.

(Look out for an exclusive interview with the man himself in issue 3 as he talks about his new film, *Schramm* - which explores the diseased mind of a serial killer. Necronomicon will also be giving away some limited edition T-shirts in a special competition - you have been warned, so be there!)



**GRAND
GUIGNOL**

*Charity Film Festival
on October 30th
(All proceeds to the
Marie Curie Cancer
Care Trust).*

For further details
please send an SAE
to Alex J Low,
1265 Pollokshaws Rd.
Glasgow
G41 3RR



THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES

Given the current mystery surrounding the "beast of Exmoor", Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's fabled tale of a devil hound materialising from out of the eerie Dartmoor mists, seems all the more convincing as Sherlock Holmes investigations reveal

First filmed in 1914 as *Der Hund von Baskerville* in Germany and more famously with Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce essaying the leading roles of Holmes and Watson in the later 1939 version, this particular Conan Doyle story is very much his prime Gothic horror tale. His general preferal of Holmes logical mind and scientific art of detection are relegated to secondary status here next to the forboding atmosphere of the moors and the supernatural aura which surrounds the hound.

In much the same way that Thomas Hardy's Egdon Heath becomes a central "character" in *"The Return of the Native"*, so too does Dartmoor lend an imposing presence to *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Whilst Hardy drew inspiration for the heath from the very real-life Dorset countryside, so too does Conan Doyle use actual places to decorate his own devilish story. Though opinions still differ, it's generally considered that Brent Tor is the "grey, melancholy hill, with a strange jagged summit" that Watson beheld, with Lew House at Lew Trenchard standing in for Baskerville Hall, Widecombe for Grimpen and Gussop for the book's dreaded Grimpen Mire.

The story, very briefly as I'm sure you're all familiar with it, centres on Sir Henry Baskerville inheriting his ancestral home upon the sudden death of his uncle, Sir Charles Baskerville - whose mysterious death is attributed to the legendary curse placed upon the



Baskerville family which manifests itself in the guise of a demonic hound.

Hammer Films treatment of the story in 1959 is most probably the definitive version, for a number of reasons. First off, the cast is uniformly excellent. Peter Cushing as Holmes is operating almost as a mirror image of his revered portrayal of the vampire slayer Professor Van Helsing from *Dracula* (1958).

Both characters are scientific, reasoning men battling against the superstitions of the ecumenical world. As such, Cushing is an ideal choice for the role of Holmes, offering a calm but authoritative exterior, sorely needed in

a story where Holmes is largely absent as Conan Doyle allows the moorland atmosphere and legends to take deliberate centre stage.

Though Cushing is mainly off-screen, his characterisation is strong enough to leave a lasting impression upon the viewer. Able support is supplied by the solid and dependable Andre Morell as Watson, with Christopher Lee providing enough regality and emotion to portray the wealthy and fiercely passionate Sir Henry.

Hammer also realised that their phenomenal success with both of the company's *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*

"Therefore, take heed and beware the moor in those dark hours when evil is exalted, else you will surely meet the hound of hell."

remakes could be replicated here by accentuating the horrific aspects of the story, and in particular, the vein of human cruelty which runs through the story but remained undeveloped in earlier film versions.

A rampaging opening sequence explains the origins of the legend as the sadistic Sir Hugo Baskerville tries to rape a servant girl during one of his wild parties. The garish red hunting jackets of Sir Hugo and his decadent aristocratic companions are highly appropriate as he sets off in pursuit of the helpless girl. "Hounds - let loose the pack", his blatant threat, with "May the hound of hell get me if I don't hound her down" proving to be ironic as he corners the girl in the Abbey ruins on top of the moor, stabbing her in a cruel frenzy before thunder rumbles overhead and a ghostly hound growls, its shadow falling over Sir Hugo to signal his deserved doom.

"And so the curse of Sir Hugo came upon the Baskervilles in the shape of a hound from hell, forever to bring misfortune to the Baskerville family. Therefore, take heed and beware the moor in those dark hours when evil is exalted, else you will surely meet the hound of hell, the hound of the Baskervilles," or so Holmes is informed as he is introduced to the case by the Baskerville physician, Dr Mortimer (Francis de Wolff).

As the mysterious circumstances surrounding Sir Henry's death are recounted, Mortimer remarks that "the strange thing was, there were no footprints" to give credence to the legend of the hound with Holmes replying that the case is a "two-pipe problem."

Having been introduced to Sir Henry, and saving him from an active and very deadly tarantula, the action then switches to the moorland locale, centering on Watson, who acts as Sir Henry's bodyguard, and the eccentric neighbours, Stapleton (Ewen Solon), his daughter Cecile (Marta Landi) and the sherry-tupping Bishop Frankland (Miles Malleon in a delightful cameo).

Although red herrings abound in the shape of escaped convicts and servants with strange nocturnal rituals, Holmes eventually discovers the truth behind the hound - it is secreted away in some old tin mines and kept in a perpetual state of hunger by Stapleton and Cecile - who are illegitimate heirs to the Baskerville fortune and plan to unleash the hound on Sir Henry, the last surviving member of the family, in order that they might claim their "prize". The conclusion sees both Stapleton and Cecile perish with Sir Henry saved by Holmes and Watson.

In the cold light of day, the story doesn't appear the most convincing. The idea that a gigantic hound could be somehow smuggled into a close-knit moorland community without arousing suspicion strains at reality, which is why Conan Doyle cloaks the story with the brooding menace of Dartmoor and the suggestion that something supernatural is occurring. As he states in the book, the hound "could not possibly be any animal known to science... (it) was a huge creature, luminous, ghostly and spectral." Holmes himself heightens the tension exclaiming that "There is more evil around us here than I have ever encountered before", as sunlit views of the moors are gradually eclipsed by

lengthening shadows as if to reinforce the point.

Given these facts, Hammer wisely decided not to concentrate on the hound but rather the potentially fascinating subtext uncovering a layer of human cruelty and evil beneath all the high profile supernatural episodes.

To this end, it is the poverty-stricken, socially embittered Stapleton's whose almost pathological envy drives them to murder in order to improve their circumstances. Stapleton is a tense man, barely civil, whose first appearance - when lecturing Watson on the need for animal traps across the moor, indicates his true nature - namely someone who is oblivious to those around him, caring neither for humans or animals. Cecile, despite her hot-blooded Latin temperament, can be an equally cold and calculating "killer", calmly ushering Sir Henry to his clandestine assignation, and anticipated death.

The sole vestige of humanity upon the bleak moors is provided by the Baskerville's housekeeper, Mrs Barrymore who secretly provides food and clothing for her escaped relative.

Cushing's Holmes however, despite the brevity of his appearances, still remains foremost in the viewers mind. His astute brain deduces that the hound is being held in the tin mine - "What is one likely to find under the ground. Bones perhaps", whereupon he discovers the animal's scraps and beef bones, whilst also displaying Holmes customary petulance. Having delighted his friends by surviving a mine collapse he can only retort; "Most gratifying. Now when the general applause has died down I wonder if we could get back to the hall. I've hurt my leg, I'm cold and I'm hungry."

It is these idiosyncracies, coupled with Holmes' alert, reasoning mind, that so endorse the character to us. Cushing's success here led to him reprising the role of the great detective in a TV series and, to lesser effect, in the somewhat stilted Tyburn film *The Masks of Death*.

Cushing's vibrant interpretation of Holmes, together with Hammer's renowned attention to period detail and supplying head scripts elevates the film to being well ahead of the chasing pack.

The film's opening titles, "Tracy Dick - The Sensual Investigator. I keep an eye on your privates," immediately sets the irreverent tone for this wacky hardcore comedy bash. Any similarity to Chester Gould's famous character is purely accidental - don't go looking for Warren Beatty or Madonna here either, although the film is certainly sleazy enough for the controversial rock pop queen to have "graced" it!

Diving straight into the action we see Tracy's sexy sleuth conducting her own investigation into finding the hitherto "missing" G-spot, her "eureka" moment "At last, I've found it" is courtesy of the monstrous vibrator she's using - which takes on the appearance of a kind of mutated electric tooth-brush!



Our intrepid "sec" is called in on the case of business mogul, Hannibal Magnet, whose apparent wealth allows him to attract willing rubies with the ease his surname implies. Unfortunately, despite having the amorous attentions of his wife, mistress and assorted entourage, the only "hard" currency Magnet deals in is cash, as his "lump" love-making testifies.

Having been thus called onto the case, Tracy assures us that her sensitivity for such matters is "In all the right places and at all the right times."

The Adventures of Tracy Dick

Donning the raincoat, appropriately enough, to uncover the "case of the missing stiff" (ahem!) is none other than Nora Louise Kuzma - rather better known as Traci Lords, as Chester Gould's famous cartoon detective reveals much more than his investigative mind here!

Along with her nerdy assistant, the long-donged, pantie-stuffing Arthur Dork (!), Traci sets about prising Magnet away from his beloved diet of TV football - something which many long-suffering wives may well be able to relate to!

Having revealed her identity to him (and that's all at this juncture!), Traci explains to Magnet "I'm an expert on

erection technology" - (perhaps we need her to firm up the "green rooms" of economic recovery we're always hearing about!) and her will to see the case through. "It's a matter of professional pride."

Traci's intimate acquaintance with Magnet's lawyer then reveals the outrageous, but rather original plot conceits which dictate that Magnet's will is emblazoned on his most personal of organs - but only readable in a state of high excitement. It seems that his bank balance is now as impotent as his sexual performances, hence his reticence to "unfreeze" his prime asset.

All is not lost however, as Traci perceptively remarks, "Where there's a will(y) there's a way," cue a sudden burst of sub-B52's music as the now bound Hannibal is forced to watch Traci strut her stuff, along with a menagerie of female helpers as a lesbian orgy threatens to overwhelm the helpless Magnet - what an awful torture to endure!

Though I'm obviously guilty of reading more into this film than was intended, it is still interesting to note this inversion on the typical male fantasy scenario as Magnet struggles not to watch the spectacle unfolding right in front of him - at one point in the proceedings one of the girls even has to prise his eye-lids open and hold them still, forcing him to watch a *La Chèvre* (1971), though that's where any similarity with Kubrick's film ends!

As expected, "mission impossible" is accomplished making the reading of



he will have one of the most unusual in film history, but it remains a literal anticlimax as Magnet leaves his diminishing "wealth" not to his wife or coterie of female companions but to his lawyer instead.

Whilst one case closes another opens in the shape of a female client whose failure to orgasm is "cured" by assistant Dork's indiscriminate use of his wedding tuckle to, leaving yet another satisfied customer, who having passed out at the moment of climax, then recovers to sigh contentedly "Great therapy".

"We aim to please" is Dork's instant rejoinder and the film is certainly an entertaining change from the more serious "slam-bam" flesh epics which seem to proliferate these days.

Although only a minor entry in the "great sex films of our time" compendium, *The Adventures of Tracy Dork* does at least have a semblance of a story, bursts of humour, a clutch of eccentric characters and some bouts of energetic but not wholly repetitive hardcore couplings.

I'm afraid though that if push comes to shove, the choice between having ace detective Sherlock Holmes and super sleuth Tracy Dork becomes no choice at all. Move over Sher! !!!

(Special thanks to Andrew "Mr. Creosote" Gillard for supplying the "research" material here !).

Look out for the queen of Italian porn in the next issue - yes, Cicciolina herself will be appearing. Definitely the only Italian MP who'll ever grace the pages of this 'ere mag!!



FLESH & BLOOD

Summer 1993

TWO

£2.95

"My God! It's MASSIVE!!"



The most comprehensive cataloguing of 1970s British Horror ever published. Production credits, cast listings and capsule reviews are combined with a stunning selection of rare stills, posters, video covers and ad mats from around the globe. Everything you'll ever need to know about this amazing era in the history of the British Horror film! Plus a host of reviews including Franco's *Jack The Ripper* and *La Mansion De Los Muertos Vivos*, *Daughter Of Horror*, and the incredible *Order Of Death*. All this and much more available from July. Reserve a copy now. Only £2.40 (inc p & p) from

MEDIA PUBLICATIONS
26 Salford Road
Old Marston
Oxford
OX3 0RY

LOUD & STROUD

Yes, it's time for Andrew "shadows in a land of death" Stroud to peel back another rotting layer of skin and reveal more pus-filled "delights" as Necronomicon's goremeister digs up the dirt on the oriental shocker "Man Behind The Sun"- enter at your own peril!

Hello there again. I see you've recovered your shattered nervous systems and gathered up your e-mails for another exciting video review.

Well my friends, here we go, a gem for ya this time kids called *Man Behind The Sun* or *Los Hombres Detras Del Sol* for Spanish readers!

Picture the setting, Japanese farmers working in the fields, the sun is all but gone as winter approaches. They are working hard for their families just to put a little food on the dinner table but after a hard day in the fields they like nothing better than getting involved in a few military experiments.

"after a hard day in the fields they like nothing better than getting involved in a few military experiments."

As the film begins so the story unfolds, even though the Japanese dialogue does get slightly annoying and the subtitles fly along so quickly you have no chance of reading them, but after a bit you can just get the general gist of things. (Also, you'll need a 30" TV to get any chance of reading the subtitles).

Anyway, too with the show and as far as I can grasp, the Jap army is putting its finishing touches to its chemical and explosives arsenal with the farmer's and villagers' the reluctant volunteer's affair being captured.

A young woman of about 20 years is subject to some sort of freezing experiment in which her skin is welded to an icy fence with freezing cold water. Soon, icicles begin to form as her flesh turns from pink to to purple and almost black.

The sadistic guard who watches over her, then applies more water over a period of 10 hours (we are told), after which time she would have died anyway from the cold.

Her arms are whacked with a cane to check for complete stiffness - the sound of which is very convincing. When the guard is satisfied she is ready he burns her inside before she defrosts (!)

As they enter the room (glimpses of an old Frankenstein movie) her gravity defying arms are placed in a tank of warm water. Relief enters her face, but the doctor up's the temperature until the water is alive and boiling.

Having removed her from the tank, the doctor then proceeds to pull the skin from the arms, like an elbow length glove, revealing muscle tissue and bare bone. The special effects are very graphic and realistic - almost too real?

As you recover from this scene, you are then confronted with a man whose hands are inside a quick-freezing unit. As he pulls them out he is made to place them on a table whereupon his frozen fingers are unceremoniously shattered with what appears to be an old school ruler. As his "fish fingers" fly about the place he screams in terror in true Japanese (over)acting style.

As the plot trickles along we are shown some real Korean war footage as artillery shells explode on enemy targets and suicide bombers crash into a convoy of ships and blowing them to pieces.

"the doctor then proceeds to pull the skin from the arms, like an elbow length glove, revealing muscle tissue and bare bone."

Next "treat" in store is a young boy in an operating theatre as a surgeon explains "there will be no problems" the boy is anaesthetised in seconds and the surgeon wastes no time in making an incision along the stomach as he removes the boy's heart and liver.

"crucified victims wait for the shells to hit home and as the smoke clears the effects of the test can be seen in all their devastating glory."

The corpse looks fairly real but not a patch on Romero's *Day of the Dead* gut-spilling scene courtesy of Mr. Saurin.

After all this, the doctor proclaims pre-puberty organs are hard to come by and the boy's remains are carted off to a conveniently placed furnace room to be disposed of - common practice in films of this particular genre.

Now, onto a bit of explosive testing as crucified victims wait for the shells to hit home and as the smoke clears, the effects of the test can be seen in all their devastating glory. The victims still impaled on tripods have their limbs blown off and their faces melted away by the blast, as people's eyes hang out, struck by waves of shrapnel.

As they scream in terror the troops inspect the carnage and death - the experiment being deemed a "success", obviously!

Victims with their limbs still intact make a tin life it but are soon gunned down or run over by the military might whilst back at HQ the evil Commander tosses a gut into a room full of starving rats. The animal - needless to say, is torn to pieces in an extremely graphic scene.

With scenes like this 8 out of 10 cat owners had better stay well clear of this particular film !

The film goes slightly haywire from here as enemy troops attack the base and destroy its contents, which include babies in pickle jars - the like of which also appear on the front cover of the video.

Well, everyone doesn't live happily ever after as I'm sure you've gathered. Maybe some will be joining the NHS, or there may be a new doctor with an evil grin starting at your local surgery, who knows ?!

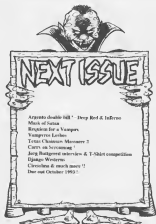
*"the evil Commander
turns a cat into a room
full of starving rats."*

Well, that just about wraps it up for another issue. Hope you enjoyed it, if you didn't you'd better check under your bed at night for grey old ladies with black eyeballs.

See ya soon, and oh yeah, I almost forgot - stay sick and "peace"!!!

Andrew Stroud

(Fans of "Levi & Stroud" may like to know that Andrew's column for the next issue is a panegyric devoted to one of his favourite idols - yes, you've guessed it, Mary Whitehouse ! - Ed.).



THE INNER SANCTUM

Movie posters, stills, books and magazines, plus TV spin-off items and annals:- 22, New Bridge Street, Fore Street, Exeter. Telephone 0392-427237 during normal working hours.

MASSIVE DISCOUNTS FREEPHOTOS

Horror, Sci-fi, Thriller, Hammer, blockbusters, westerns. Colour & B/W photos, pressbooks, stills, imported rarities.

Send £ 2.00 (refundable) for two catalogues, photo and vouchers to the following address :

L.Malik, 7 Waldeck Road, Tottenham, North London. N15



